

**WE SHALL LIVE AGAIN**

*By the same Author*

UNDER MOSCOW SKIES  
THE GREAT OFFENSIVE  
RED BREAD  
HUMANITY UPROOTED  
BROKEN EARTH  
HONOUR THY FATHER

# WE SHALL LIVE AGAIN

MAURICE HINDUS

COLLINS  
48 PALL MALL LONDON  
1939

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN  
COLLINS CLEAR-TYPE PRESS : LONDON AND GLASGOW  
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*Part One*

GLORY

## Chapter I

### YESTERDAY, TO-DAY, TO-MORROW

I WAS an eye-witness of three epochal stages in the history of Czechoslovakia; I saw the Republic at the height of its glory; I saw its civilization crumble before my eyes, and I saw the survival of those elements which in my judgment will make it live again.

This book attempts to tell in terms of human experience the story of these three moments in the life of the Republic.

## Chapter II

### THE HIGH MOMENT

JUNE, 1938, we cleared customs at Bodenbach, the Czech-German frontier station, and started for Prague. To the eye there was scarcely any difference between the countryside here and the Germany through which we had just come. Even the land, hilly and wooded and interspersed with vast stretches of valley, was the same as on the other side of the border. Everywhere the same tidiness, the same solicitude for order, the same watchfulness of detail, the same houses too, and the same barns with the tiled roofs glistening in the hot sun. The crops were the same, the methods of tillage no more and no less advanced, and evidencing in spite of drought the fruits of assiduous and understanding labour. Hop-yards, wheat-fields, beet-lands, meadows—all presented a picture of ample if not luxurious growth. No land wasted, not a span of it, nowhere a gleam of yellow mustard or other common weeds; and cattle and horses shiny with care and contentment.

Nor did the people look or act differently. Sturdy and sunburned, they wore the same clothes that peasants did in Germany, and nobody was barefooted, not even the children. The sun was hot—superb haying weather, and as our train sped by only the children bothered to turn and look. Every minute counted, every move with pitchfork or rake was a triumph, and women worked side by side with men, doing the same heavy labour, precisely as in Germany.

The implements here were of the same make as in Germany—the same mowing machines, horse rakes, pitchforks, scythes; but seldom any tractors, hay loaders and other advanced agricultural machinery, such as roar over the Russian and American lands. As in Germany, in Holland, and in other western European countries, the smallness of the farms here made the use of such machinery neither economically nor agriculturally feasible. The human hand could do the work as well, and the hand here in Czechoslovakia neither shirked nor botched its tasks. It was as skilled as any in Western Europe, indeed, in the whole world.

For a long stretch between Bodenbach and Prague the population was largely German, Sudeten Germans, or Czechs who, in the pre-Republic days had lived under Austrian hegemony. But excepting that the land was richer, the crops more bountiful, the houses more decorative, with more trees and flowers in the yards, there was scarcely a break in the nature of the civilization even in the purely Czech territories, which with our approach to Prague we were passing. In spite of difference in race and the thousand-year-old conflict between them, Czechs and Germans in this part of the world were products and promulgators of a way of life which, in its outward aspects, seemed no more dissimilar than one row of beets from another.

I had left London earlier than I had planned so as to reach Prague in time for the Sokol *Slet*. Once every seven years this far-flung Czech society, which had done so much to bring into being the Czechoslovak Republic, to promote the health, the sociability, the national spirit of the Czechoslovak people, gathers in the capital for an exhibition of its gymnastic achievements and its national unity.

Visitors from all over the world, and not only Czechs and Slavs were flocking to Prague, and on my arrival I found the city swarming with people.

The Watslavsky Namesti—the leading avenue with its numerous traffic lanes, teemed with humanity. Here were colour, energy, dignity, friendliness. It seemed as though everybody knew everybody else, and all were on their best behaviour. Youth predominated—boys and girls of high-school age. Almost all the girls had bobbed hair and wore their trim and simple Sokol outfits, white waists, short red skirts, barely touching the knees and long stockings. Not one wore a hat and seldom a kerchief. With arms interlocked they paraded about the main avenue gazing with a quiet wonder at the lights, the buildings, the crowds, the glory and the triumph of the ancient and ungaudy city of Prague. Boys were likewise parading around in pairs and in small groups, spellbound like the girls by the sights of the city.

I sauntered from street to street and marvelled at the discipline. Nobody pushed. Nobody got into the way of others. With ease the pedestrian could turn back, cross an avenue, or go in any direction

he wished. With spontaneity the crowds obeyed the city's traffic rules and the sudden traffic signals. Policemen were on their beats, but apart from standing and watching and now and then lifting a white-sleeved arm or answering a question, there was little they had to do except perhaps marvel as I did, as every foreign visitor must have done, at the matchless discipline of the people, even of those who came from far-away villages.

If a tramcar or bus stopped and the conductor said, "Sorry, no more room," no one made any effort to push inside. I couldn't help thinking of the scenes in Moscow or other Russian cities during the hours when factories or offices closed. The crowds poured into the streets and waited for trams and buses to take them home, and neither signs nor cries of "No more room" kept them from mauling their way inside. The summons of a militiaman didn't always deter them from making their own traffic laws for their own immediate convenience. The Czech is a Slav, the Russian is a Slav, and for the first time I sensed the extraordinary contrast between them, the integrated reflexes of the one and the explosive impulsiveness of the other!

More than half a million visitors had come to the city. They crowded the homes, the hotels, the schoolhouses, the barracks, the streets, yet they were scarcely a strain on the administration of the city, none at all on the patience and the good humour of the people. Everything functioned with ease—trams, buses, radio, restaurants, hotels, telephones, telegraphs, everything. Nowhere were there brawls or altercations, scarcely a sign of drunkenness, even in the *vychepls* (beer halls) and the wine cellars. People sat around tables, men and women together, often with their children, ate roast goose, dumplings, cabbage, drank beer, chattered, laughed, sang. Here was a demonstration of restraint and co-operation, as instinctive almost as breathing, and all the more extraordinary because it was voluntary. These humble Czechoslovaks would mar, neither by word nor act nor gesture, the triumphant festivities which had brought them together.

During the next few days at the Masaryk Stadium, members of the Sokols gave mass exhibitions of gymnastic drills. Men and

women performed separately, as did young people. The sight of thirty or more thousand human beings in their gay outfits performing in unison complicated gymnastic drills, was a stirring spectacle, whether in bright sunlight or in murky drizzle. The women were more spirited and more lyrical than the men, the girls more buoyant than the boys. Perhaps bodily rhythm is more innate in the female than in the male. But they were all magnificent, even the men over fifty. Never anywhere had I seen men between fifty and seventy display so much physical vigour and alertness. The skill, the grace, the sheer nobility of their movements was breath-taking. For once those of us in Europe who had been listening to shouts of strife and slogans of hate, felt an enormous relief, indeed a pride and a joy in the human race. The sight of these tens of thousands of men and women and young people giving themselves to the glorification of the human body and human life, enhanced the emotional appeal of the exhibitions. "Human beings can be so beautiful, so beautiful," said an Australian woman who was sitting beside me. Perhaps she, like many others in the stadium, was thinking of another kind of physical drilling in nearby lands with the avowed aim of subjugating the very people who were now giving her and others a fresh appreciation of the grace and beauty of the human body, of the joy and glory of sheer living. "It's enough to make any one weep with happiness," said a veteran American newspaper man. That was how moving it all was—those gymnastic drills in the Masaryk Stadium.

On the 6th of July came the Sokol parade. Together with a Czech journalist, his father and mother and an English journalist, I watched it from the balcony of my hotel. Only five weeks earlier the people in Czechoslovakia had participated in another parade—mobilization against possible war with Germany. My Czech companions on the balcony couldn't help speaking of it, and the people in the streets were reminded too of that recent event. The mobilization had saved the country from immediate attack, so the Czechs had been saying, though Berlin had been heatedly denying that it had planned an onslaught on its Slav neighbour. In Czechoslovak eyes the success of their mobilization spelled not only immediate triumph but continued security for the Republic. It inspired a fresh

faith in its power to hold off the threatening enemy, and so this parade was more than a celebration of a Sokol Slet. It was a commemoration of a moment of triumph and dedication.

The Czechs were the most dignified marchers. They were faultlessly correct. The men wore the prescribed Sokol outfit—smart and business-like and, excepting for the violent scarlet of the high-collared blouses, cut to a purely western pattern. The women likewise wore the regulation Sokol street attire—khaki outfits like the American women's uniforms in the world war. The marching of the men and the women was beyond reproach. Their tread was firm and in rhythm with the music of the playing bands. One could feel here even more than during the gymnastic drills that a mis-step or a deviation from the proper swing or posture of the body would cause embarrassment, perhaps a sense of sin. Outwardly and inwardly these Czechs never had seemed more superbly disciplined for the task and the consecration of the moment. Indeed at no other time did they demonstrate so convincingly the purely western character of their behaviour. Besides the other Slavs, the Moravians, the Slovaks, the Carpatho Russians, the Slovenes, the Croats, the Bulgarians, the Yugoslavs, they were like a reef which stoically withstood all splashing tempests.

The other Slavs seemed like a people from another planet whose behaviour was the opposite of the correctness and the dignity of the Czechs. They made me think of a field of poppies in bloom, blown about by a breeze. They splashed the avenue with colour, red, green, blue, yellow—all the colours of the spectrum, and black and white. The discipline of the blast furnace, the pneumatic drill, any modern machine—seemed beyond their remote or immediate experience. They did as they pleased. The playing of the bands meant nothing to them, was at times only an encumbrance to the wild rhythm of their souls. Again and again their shouts drowned out the blare of the brass instruments. They hopped and whirled and jigged singly, in couples, in groups, now to the accompaniment of their lusty singing, now to a wild and joyous shout.

The crowds on the pavements were as jubilant as the marchers. They shouted with joy—no slogans, no words, just shouts, like children at play, and they never stopped, not for an instant. There were no cheer-leaders as at an American football game. No one gave

any signals. Nowhere was there a hint of official compulsion. Each man and woman, each boy and girl, acted on his or her own behalf as if in response to an inner urge to proclaim with all the might and fervour of their hearts their faith in themselves and in the Republic. There was neither challenge nor threat in their voices. There was no call to arms, neither against Germany nor any other land or people.

When Austrian Czechs marched by carrying a huge Nazi flag the shouts and the joy at once died out. Lungs and throats seemed as if suddenly emptied of all breath. No one booed, no one hissed, no one manifested disrespect for the banner of the threatening enemy. But no sooner was it out of sight than the tumult broke out again, as loud as before and void of the least sound of a snarl at any one in the world—a tumult only of joy and dedication. There were no tears, not even of happiness. There were no speeches, neither of denunciation nor of self-adulation, hardly any words at all, just free-hearted shouts and now and then peals and peals of prolonged and triumphant “Na Zdars!”

## Chapter III

### SLAVS WITH A DIFFERENCE

BECAUSE the Czechs are a Slav people I had imagined that my knowledge of Russian, the most widely-spoken Slav language, would be a helpful introduction to Czech. Yet I had no more than glanced at a Czech grammar and listened to a few sentences of the language than I realized that I had been wrong. In spite of my knowledge of Russian I should need to study Czech as a new language with a vocabulary, an idiom, a grammar, a caprice, all its own. Of course the common origin of many words proved a help in the acquisition of a vocabulary.

What was true of the language was even more true of the people. Though there are Czechs who insist that their common Slav origin makes for more than a biological kinship between themselves and the Russians, I, for one, discovered scant evidence in support of this belief. One glance at Prague, for example, was sufficient to dispel from my mind the notion that because of their common Slav ancestry, Russians and Czechs had been pursuing similar destinies or have evinced similar proclivities in the civilizations they had been building. Nowhere in Prague does one discover sign, sound or smell of Byzantium; no gilded domes flame in the sun; nowhere is there any splash of wild colour in the outward appearance of churches, castles, mansions. Gothic spires rising steep and sharp as in Germany or England mark the skyline of the city; the grey or brown of London or Berlin dominate its colour scheme. Old public and private buildings are weighted with antiquity, scarcely less settled than the antiquity of London or Berlin, though livened sometimes by a profusion of Baroque. The Watslavsky Namesti, Prague's Broadway, really broad, sometimes beautiful, never over-bright, might have been a street in Germany or in England, but not in pre-revolutionary Russia, except, of course, in Leningrad, a city that was Russia's first salute to the supremacy of the western world.

Had Cyril and Methodius converted the Western Slavs to Greek Catholicism in the ninth century, the history of the Czechs might have been more or less closely interlinked with that of Russia, and the appearance of Prague might have borne a closer resemblance to Moscow, Kazan or Kiev, than to Berlin or Vienna. But the Greek missionaries died young; with the coming of the Magyars, the Moravians were cut off from the east; and ultimately, in the tenth century, the good King Wenceslas, King of Bohemia and Moravia, following in the footsteps of his pious mother, hastened the conversion of his people to the Roman Catholic faith, and thereby cemented their bonds with the western world.

Observers more discriminating than myself have noted other striking similarities between Czechs and Russians. Yet to my perception it was the dissimilarities between these two peoples that grew continually in scope and impressiveness. Shortly after my arrival in the country I spent a few days in a resort a short distance from Prague. At my hotel I was assigned a place at a table with a Czech family; father, mother and a girl of high-school age. For two days we met during meals, nodded to one another, muttered *dobre utro* (good-morning) or *poklona* (greetings) and that was all. Not a word of conversation. Not a trace of curiosity on part of the man, his wife, his daughter—in the stranger at their table. I couldn't imagine a Russian so aloof. To the traveller in Russia with an urge for sociability, the irrepressible loquaciousness of the people in hotels, in restaurants, on trains, is an inestimable source of enlightenment and delight. But these Czechs at my table seemed no more eager for talk with a stranger than are the English.

Finally, I opened a conversation and soon enough we freely exchanged opinions on many subjects. But, not once did the father, mother or daughter venture a question of a personal nature. Russians would have bombarded me with such questions. In subsequent observations and associations with Czechs, even in villages, I was astounded at their care not to encroach on the privacies of others, nor to allow others to encroach on theirs. Later, when I heard Slovaks complain of the snobbishness of the Czechs who lived in their midst as teachers or government officials, I understood their feelings. It was easy for Slovaks, who are as irrepressibly sociable as Russians, to confuse Czech love of privacy with snobbishness.

During my stay in the resort I became acquainted with a man of about thirty, a Czech from Brno. He had come to spend a few days with his fiancée who was living in a private home with friends. The hotels were so crowded that he couldn't find a room, so he slept on a cot in a hallway of the first floor of the hotel in which I was staying. His fiancée's friends had invited him to stay with them, and they had a spare room for him. But he refused the invitation, and when I asked him why, he answered with pride, "If my fiancée's friends would take money I'd stay with them. But they refuse to take money and so I had to decline their hospitality. I am a Czech, and Czechs are like that. They love to be independent."

I wondered what a Russian would have said had he heard these words? He might have roared with laughter, so fantastic would such a conception of independence sound to him. No one in Russia I had ever known in all the years of my sojourn there, would allow his sense of independence to override his sociability and decline an offer of hospitality. No matter how crowded they are, Russians never are too crowded to offer shelter to a visitor, a friend, or the friend of a friend. If all the beds are occupied there always is room on the table, on chairs, on the floor, and if no bedding is available, there always is an overcoat or a skirt to take the place of a mattress or a blanket. But this Czech frowned on an offer of hospitality which grated on his sense of independence.

To a Russian, an American, an Englishman as well, the Czech love of independence often assumes awkward forms. Once I invited the mayor of an old Czech town to dinner, and when the meal was over he insisted on paying his own bill. "We Czechs," he said, "don't like to feel under obligation to others."

"But I invited you," I protested.

"It makes no difference, I always pay for my meals and for my beer."

No amount of arguing could change his mind. It is well therefore for the visitor to Czechoslovakia to come to an understanding with guests whom he invites to a meal as to who is to pay the bill. Especially is it important to do so if the guest happens to be a woman. An American-born Czech, a physician, once invited a

girl in Prague to dinner. When it came to paying the bill she insisted on sharing it with him.

"But I like to take you out to dinner," remonstrated the American.

"And I like to go to dinner with you," answered the girl.

"I like to go to a good place and I can afford to pay for both of us."

"If you want to invite me again, you'll have to go to places that aren't so good, because I haven't as much money as you have."

"But it gives me great pleasure to entertain you—don't you see how it is, and besides, in America, if I invited a girl to a meal and let her pay her share of the bill, she might never go out with me again."

"I am not an American, I am a Czech girl."

"Are all Czech girls like that?"

"All decent Czech girls are like that."

"And they never accept any favours from men?"

"Yes, they do, from their brothers, from relatives, and from the man they expect to marry!"

"And she had to have her way," said the American-Czech, who told me the incident.

Nor was she an exception.

During my stay in a small Moravian town I invited to lunch the secretary of the Principal of the High School who had put his office and his staff at my disposal to facilitate my studies of the community. The secretary was a young lady over twenty, a graduate of the gymnasium, a fine linguist, well-read in the literature of her own and of other languages, particularly English and Russian and with highly-advanced views on politics, economics, and social relationships. Yet my invitation more than embarrassed her, and she neither declined nor accepted it. When I asked why she seemed so hesitant she answered that never in her life had she had lunch in a restaurant with a man. Finally she accepted the invitation, but when it came to paying the bill she would not allow me to pay for her. The more I insisted that she was my guest the more hurt and embarrassed she became.

Later, when I saw the principal of the school I spoke to him of the "stubbornness" of his secretary. "No," he corrected me, "it

isn't stubbornness, it's just Czech good manners." He was surprised she had accepted the invitation. "If you were a Czech she would never have accepted it; since you're a foreigner she thought you'd be offended if she refused. Girls here don't get invitations to meals in restaurants from their men friends, and if they did they'd never accept them—it just isn't good form."

In Prague, of course, there are girls, especially among those who have studied or travelled abroad, who have broken with the old usages. But their example is not meeting with a conspicuous response in other communities, not even among college girls.

Servants in Czechoslovakia show no servility. The doorman at the hotel will bow to a guest or remove his hat. But when addressed he will not punctuate every word or phrase he hears with a meek "Yes, sir." Such expressions as "Gracious sir" or "Gracious lord" or "Your excellence" are alien to his vocabulary. In the hotel in which I stopped, neither the porter nor the chambermaid treated me as though I were their superior. On learning that I had come from America both engaged me in friendly conversation and asked what America was saying of the way the Czechs had mobilized their army on the 21st of May. The chambermaid had a son of military age and said, "I was so proud of him when he went, because I love him so—and if trouble comes he'll go again, and if he dies—" and she stopped short and gave a shrug and averted her eyes so that I couldn't see the gathering tears.

In Prague as in Berlin, in London, New York or Paris, the shave is a part of the day's ritual and so is the shoe shine. The moustache matters little, the beard not at all. The pompadour haircut, which, like the Kremlin, has survived in Russia all the physical and ideological battles of the Revolution, has stirred no response in the Czechs. They comb their hair backward or part it in the middle or on the side, and keep it as neatly trimmed as does the American or Englishman. They visit the barber shop as punctiliously as their favourite *vyche*p—beer hall. The shaved head so much the fashion in Germany, especially among the middle-aged and those susceptible to baldness, and which in Russia in the summer months, and not only in the warmer regions but in the colder territories and all over Siberia, is almost a creed with young and old, proletarian and

intellectual, is almost unknown in Czechoslovakia. Neither in restaurants nor in the theatre nor in any other public places is the newcomer ever startled by the gleam of bobbing shaved heads.

In Prague the knee-high boot, still much the vogue in Russia, is hardly known. The low shoe, always bright with polish, is common. The western business suit and the collar and tie are the fashion everywhere, even in proletarian districts. The cap, which in Russia is almost a symbol of proletarian fealty, and is vaunted not only by Stalin but by college professors, commands little attention in Prague, even among proletarians. The hat is the accepted form of headgear. The crease in the trousers which even foreigners after only a few days in Russia cease to miss, is an object of real concern in Prague, even to the man who has nothing to sell but his "labour power." The colour of men's clothes is sombre and predominantly blue and grey, in the village mostly black. Seldom do Czech men wear brown, and if in the course of a walk one encounters a man in a brown suit he is usually either an Englishman or a Czech who has lived in England. Not even young men are given to gay colours, and neither their shirts nor their neckties flash with the ornateness one often observes among young men in New York and Paris.

Modesty and a wish not to arouse but to allay attention seem to be the dominant moods, and the dominant tastes of young and old, even of women. They, too, indulge but little in rich colours. The Watslavsky Namesti never gleams with as rich a display of smartness as does Fifth Avenue or the Rue de la Paix. Eminently practical and schooled to frugality, even the rich Czech women prize utility at least as much and often more than ornateness. A dress is not to be worn a brief season and then thrown away. It is to afford its money's worth in wear as well as in pleasure. The lavishly-dressed woman so much in evidence in the theatre and at social gatherings in New York, in London, in Paris, is scarcely a part of the social scene in Prague, in the street, in the theatre, or in the drawing-room.

Unlike other Slavs the Czechs have lost their old love of gaudiness, and never was I so deeply impressed with this lack as during the Sokol exhibitions in the Masaryk Stadium. The crowds, the enthusiasm, the conspicuous presence of young people reminded me of an American football game. The flags, the bunting, the flowers

only accentuated this reminder. But nowhere was there the splash of colour which at an American football game billows up and down and fairly inundates the bleachers. Neither hats nor scarfs nor sweaters nor blankets nor umbrellas vied in decorativeness with those that American women love to sport at a football game.

Czechs have lived too long in the machine age to be tempted by the wild tastes of the peasantry, and yet not long enough to acquire a nostalgia for its vanished picturesqueness. Likewise they are far removed from the luxuries, the excesses, the vanities of the modern metropolis. That's why even in the most expensive restaurants, or at the opera and theatre, one seldom sees people, men or women, in evening dress. "Shall I take my evening clothes along?" I asked, while in London, an American newspaper man who had been in Prague for several months. In Russia evening clothes at official receptions are imperative. But—"You probably won't wear them," he answered.

Their spirit of independence, their modesty, their frugality, their very competence, as well as their historic inheritance, have made the Czechs a middle-of-the-road people. They seem to recoil from extravagance of any kind in drink, in food, in dress, in emotion, in politics, in intellectual speculation. In a few hotels in Prague in which foreigners live, prices of rooms and even more of food are almost as extortionate as in similar hotels in other cities in Europe or America. But Czechs seldom patronize these hotels. "I'll take you to a restaurant right here in Prague," said a Czech writer, "where you can get an excellent meal of soup, goose, potatoes, cabbage, dumplings, and a big pilsener for nine crowns," which in English money is about one and threepence. We went to that restaurant, enjoyed a hearty meal for exactly the price my friend had spoken. "Conspicuous consumption," which Veblein had assured us is a cardinal trait of the leisure class, is scarcely a part either of the psychology or the idiom of the Czech middle class. But then the Czech's middle class is no leisure class in the literal meaning of the words. Their middle class exalts work as much as it does frugality, and even their women with but few notable exceptions, cannot be labelled "leisure class."

I was therefore amazed when one evening during a visit to a

Prague night club, I saw three middle-aged men with three hostesses at their table ordering bottle after bottle of champagne. Once they sent glasses of it to the orchestra. Their reckless disregard for money which I had thought alien to the Czech astounded me.

"Are these people bankers or landlords?" I said to the waiter.

"I don't know their profession," he answered, "but I know their nationality. They're Hungarian nobles."

"Did you ever see Czechs buying champagne for hostesses?" I asked.

"Our people," he answered, "know better. But Hungarians, Poles, Yugoslavs, Montenegrins—when they come to Prague, they throw money around as though it were paper, and sometimes the less they have the more recklessly they throw it about."

"What do you mean?"

"They borrow—they are the greatest borrowers in the world—but Czechs are different, they only borrow money when they must."

Yet, despite his extraordinary money sense the Czech is not greedy. He saves for the sake of acquiring property of some kind, usually a home of his own. I know of no country in the world where there are as many saving institutions as in Czechoslovakia, even into far-away villages. With the family as the corner-stone of the Czech's social and emotional life, a home of his own looms in the foreground of all his thoughts and strivings. The small business man would rather live in a home of his own outside of Prague than in the most commodious apartment in the city.

In his business methods the Czech is as moderately-minded as he is in all other aspects of his daily life. The business man will content himself with a modest profit. This is one reason why food is so cheap. True there is rigid government control of prices, but even without it, food would have been cheap. In the automatic restaurants an enormous plate of fish or vegetable soup—really a meal in itself—costs about twopence. Sandwiches of meat, cheese, egg and honey, are so cheap that even a poor man can afford to buy them, and the quality is beyond reproach. Czech *domaci khleb*—home bread—is perhaps the best in all Europe. I have known Americans who seldom eat bread at home, but who

make *domaci khleb* and butter an important item in all their meals. On my first arrival in Prague, fresh from Berlin, where eggs and butter were rationed, and meats, especially sausage, had degraded in quality, the extraordinary display of goose and veal and beef in butcher shops and of dairy products in grocery stores and in restaurants, and their incredible cheapness, seemed almost a miracle. I couldn't help thinking that whatever the grievances of the Sudeten Germans against the Czechs, with respect to food in quality, quantity, price, they were infinitely better off than the people in Germany at the moment, or within the visible future. For twopence one could obtain in the Prague cafeterias two huge glasses of milk, fresh, fragrant, rich in butter fat, and two huge slices of bread and butter, a purchase that would rouse the envy of many a mother in Germany.

Curiously enough, in rendering service to others, the Czech again and again appraises it in terms of its worth to himself. "Why," said a porter in a hotel, "do you want to go to the station in a taxi? The bus is just as good, and charges only two crowns, and a taxi will cost you ten." He offered this information without any inquiry on my part as to the relative cost of either method of transportation. "Hotel So-and-so in Italy," said a Czech travel agent to an American journalist, "is listed in the books as 'second class,' but is at least as good as hotel So-and-so, which is listed as first class, and costs forty per cent less." "But my paper insists on my staying in a first class hotel," argued the American. "But I tell you, Hotel So-and-so is as good as Hotel So-and-so, and costs forty per cent less," contended the Czech. To him, though engaged in the travel business, the mere label of "first class" carried no weight in this instance.

Late one night I arrived in a small Czech city. The porter in the hotel explained that all single rooms were taken, and that he could only put me into a double room which would cost ten crowns more than a single room. The next morning I went for a walk, and on my return I discovered that my baggage had disappeared from my room. Alarmed, I dashed down and asked the porter what had happened to my baggage. "We've moved it to a single room on the same floor—it'll cost you ten crowns less." In all my travels the world over I never had known a porter or hotel-keeper

to change me from one room to another of his own accord, because it was cheaper in price!

Always the Czech tempers his appetite for gain with a sense of reasonableness.

Czechs are taller than Russians except, of course, Siberians and Kuban Cossacks. At least as sturdy as the Russians, with high shoulders, deep chests, wide backs, their faces though broad rarely show any Mongolian strain of the high cheek-bone or the slanting eye. Their stride is long, firm, never hurried. Unlike the Russian or other Slavs, the Czech calculates his steps ahead, so as to avoid encroaching on others or blocking a passage-way. No matter how crowded streets are, it is always easy for the pedestrian to make his way about the city. Nothing is so offensive to the Czech as reckless or undisciplined walking.

The corpulent fellow, the man with the bulging paunch, whom the Revolution has all but outlawed in Russia, who in Berlin defies all Nazi admonitions, is a frequent figure in the Czech city, though not in the village. You would think the Sokol with its cult of physical perfection would rally the nation against corpulence in men and women. But it hasn't. The president of the Sokol society walking at the head of his section in the July parade was no example of athletic lithereness. But then Pilsener beer has the reputation of being the best in the world, and in Prague, except in the hotels for foreigners, it is cheaper than soda-water in America. Food—bread, butter, eggs, goose, sausage, dumplings are likewise cheap, and the Czech appetite unlike Czech politics never seems to have suffered any setbacks. Even dyspeptic men watching Czechs in any of their cafeterias woud be seized by an uncontrollable appetite for food.

Czech women on first sight are a contradiction and a puzzle. You are astonished to see so many beautiful young girls in Prague. Every evening the Watslavsky Namesti swarms with them. Their eyes are bright, their complexions clear, their demeanour cheerful. The coquettices, sophistications, artificialities of the modern metropolis, are almost as alien to them as its extravagances. There is in them, in their eyes, their smile, their voices, in the very carriage of their finely built bodies, the simplicity and affability of the peasant.

And they are surprisingly mature in body and mind. If they have graduated from the gymnasium they talk about history, politics, and literature with an impressive appreciation and perspective. They love to dance, sing, take long walks, climb mountains, picnic in the woods, play games; and in spite of Sokol propaganda they disdain neither cigarettes, beer or wine. They are friendly and companionable. But at twenty their bosoms deepen, their hips widen, their faces broaden, and even their ankles seem to grow thicker.

Here, essentially, is a middle-class people with middle-class tastes, middle-class love of enterprise and discipline, middle-class love of family life, middle-class worship of privacy, middle-class regard for compromise, and a middle-class regard for the sanctity of private possession and personal integrity. Mine is mine, yours is yours. That is more than a motto in this energetic little land, it is a habit and a creed. Travelling on trains I never had to worry about baggage. I could go off to the dining-room, stay there as long as I chose, visit a passenger in the next compartment, or a far-away coach, walk around the station whenever the train stopped for any length of time, and nothing ever disappeared. In Prague and other places I would go off for the day and leave my key in the door of my room, and I never lost a handkerchief or a razor blade. Had I left my door unlocked in a Russian hotel the chambermaid and the hall porter would have thought me crazy, and would have lectured me eloquently on the danger to my baggage, if not to my soul, of such utterly reckless behaviour!

The Czech aristocracy and intelligentsia were annihilated after the defeat at the White Mountain in 1620. Since then Czechs have had no class to uphold or perpetuate a sense of social superiority, or any marked class distinctions. That is why Czechs have so readily taken to democratic ideas in their personal life and in government. "We've had no one to look up to and no one to look down upon," said a Czech school-teacher, "and so we've remained just ourselves, common people."

Indeed, they are a race of common people, with no pretensions or desires to be anything else. When the Republic was founded it was easy for them to abolish titles and to proclaim the equality of all citizens regardless of race, religion or sex. Unlike Russians or

Germans, they have seldom been carried away by abstraction or rhetoric. The sceptic and romantic, the so-called superfluous man who dominates the pages of the old Russian literature and the stage of the old Russian history, is to them an anomaly, at best an object of pity, never of emulation. They have been incapable of the untempered hates and loves of the Russian, in personal life, in politics, in social relations. Always their sense of reasonableness has saved them from violent thought or violent emotion.

Once I discussed with a Czech mother and her young daughter the subject of dowries in Czechoslovakia. The institution is almost as widespread among the townspeople as among the peasantry.

"I am in love with a young doctor," said the girl. "He has one more year in which to finish his studies. It will be some time before he will be well enough established to support me. Why then shouldn't my parents give me a dowry so that I can marry him as soon as he comes out of college? What sense is there for them and for me to wait until they die before I get a share of my inheritance? It is more important to me now when I am young and want to be happy than it will be in later years."

The mother agreed with the girl's viewpoint.

Even in their romance the Czechs remember their reasonableness.

## Chapter IV

### THE SHADOW OF A MAN

IT HAD rained in Prague all morning, but stopped as my train started to chug its way out of the city. I was on my way to Tabor.

A fog hung over the earth and I could see little of the country from the window. So I slumped into my seat and looked at the man across from me, the only other passenger in my compartment. Clean-shaven, well-dressed and portly, he was obviously an official or business man.

Suddenly it started to rain again: the wind blew a shaft of it into the compartment. My companion leaped to his feet, shut the window tight and went back to reading his newspaper. He had a sheaf of journals beside him, including the Agrarian *Venkov* and the Communist *Rude Pravo*.

Moved by a sudden impulse, I said to my neighbour:

"You don't happen to be going to Tabor?"

He eyed me with some curiosity and answered:

"No, but I know the town."

Just to make conversation I said:

"I am on my way there."

"Sightseeing?"

"I'm a writer," I told him, "and I want to write about Tabor."

"Good, very good. It's a small town with a great past, and Masaryk loved it. In a speech he delivered in the town he said, 'Tabor is our programme.'"

I had read enough of Tabor to sense the significance of Masaryk's words. In Czech history Tabor occupies a place of honour and glory. A brochure I had picked up in Prague said: "The name of the city of Tabor heads the most famous chapter of our national history of the fifteenth century. It was the cradle of medieval Czech democracy—the district where in the year 1420 the great dream of the Czech about a 'kingdom of God on earth,' a place where all men would be brothers and would not be beholden to one another, was realized. It was here that the great legacy of Master John Huss

was guarded against all enemies by the 'Fighters of God' under the leadership of Jan Zhizhka of Trocnov."

It was to Hrad Kozi in the immediate vicinity of Tabor that John Huss had fled in the year of 1412. It was at Sezimovo Usti, also nearby, that the first Hussite parish in Bohemia was founded. Tabor itself became the seat of the most formidable rebellion of the fifteenth century. It was known as the Hussite rebellion. The movement had begun as an extension of that great democratic movement in Europe which had produced the Albigenses in France and Wycliffe's Lollards in England. Huss had carried English democratic doctrine to new heights; he had urged Dominion by Grace for lay as well as ecclesiastical princes. And in this he had the support of the Czech masses. He had agreed to face the Council of Constance because the Emperor Sigismund had promised him safe-conduct. But the Emperor betrayed Huss; the great Czech leader was condemned for heresy. Left to the mercy of the secular powers, he was burned to death and his ashes were scattered to the wind.

The betrayal and execution of Huss only served to crystallize the struggle of the Czechs against the corruption of the Fifteenth Century church and against the Emperor; they rebelled against the forces which stifled their growth as a people. The extreme wing of this movement centred at Tabor, where religious sentiment and national aspiration were fused with the resentment of the poorer peasants and artisans against the richer folk. Here was one of Europe's great social revolutions, inspired by John Huss, "the pale thin man in mean attire" who had stirred Bohemia with his passionate sermons. He was more powerful in his grave than he had even been in the pulpit. He had inflamed tens of thousands of his countrymen with a distrust of the old ways of life, with a passion for a fresh understanding of God, man and national destiny. Nearly the whole of Europe was mobilized by the Emperor Sigismund against the Taborites, but as long as their blind leader, General Zhizhka, was alive no ruler and no armies availed against them. Again and again the Taborites were outnumbered by armies with superior equipment, yet Zhizhka with his brilliant strategy always turned them to rout. Zhizhka never had lost a single military engagement, and thus Tabor became the symbol of the greatest and bravest war of liberation in Czech history.

"Yes," said my neighbour in the railway carriage, "Tabor to us Czechs is not a town but an idea, the core of which is truth, freedom, democracy. Be sure to visit the museum and see the Hall of Master John Huss and of Jan Zhizhka." He spoke with pride, for in July, 1938, the words truth, freedom, democracy, were a flaming part of daily Czech speech.

I looked out of the window. We passed crop after crop—wheat, clover, alfalfa; nearby on a hillside a village sprawled, a village of white houses and tiled roofs, of peace and contentment. There was nothing in the outside scene to remind the traveller of the bloody battles that had once raged there or of the passions and the glories in the name of which they had been fought.

At last we reached Tabor. My companion and I shook hands and parted. The rain had stopped but the sky was still overcast and the gathering dusk was growing deeper. But when I stepped out of the railroad station I saw a blaze of colour; here facing the clumsy austere station the earth gleamed with flowers, and at the right out of a large bed in letters of flower-heads, shone Masaryk's words, "Tabor is our programme."

The flower-beds merged into a park. As I sauntered along the wide sand-strewn lanes, I recognized all kinds of trees—birch, oak, linden, elm, pine, ash and the most magnificent weeping willows I had ever seen, their limbs dense with foliage hanging down in an endless swirl of curves and folds like the train of a queen's gown. There were benches in the park, wet now and unoccupied. At regular intervals were sand-piles for the children to play in. In between the trees were flower-beds as trim and glittering and fragrant as the ones that stretched like a jewel-studded apron in front of the railroad station. Back and forth I sauntered, marvelling at the trees so fresh and healthy, and drinking in the freshness of earth, leaves and flowers. Then I came on a statue, simple in design but eloquent in its message; a man with a Bible clasped to his breast, his head uplifted, his long hair brushed back, his saintly face shining out of the dusk with compassion. I did not need to read the inscription to know that it was John Huss.

I left the park and found myself on a broad avenue with two and three story houses, some new, some old, all clumsy and

austere. The ground floors were occupied by shops, the upper ones by residences. Obviously it was a Czech Main Street, with a monotony of style and a profligacy of brick and stone. But this was no ordinary Main Street. The buildings might be ugly, but the Czechs living in them had a way of covering ugliness, for out of doors and windows, out of tubs and built in troughs, out of pots and pans, there rose or hung down endless clusters of shrubs and flowers. Now and then I passed a house with the built-in trough outside the window so low that the flowers fairly begged to be picked. Yet no one touched them, not even little boys. Now and then someone would stop to admire them, to inhale their fragrance as I did again and again. It would have been mean to steal them from people so trustful. At one time the Taborites were among the most skilled soldiers in Europe. Now obviously they were among the most skilled florists in the continent.

I wandered from street to street in the so-called new part of the town and everywhere it was the same—flowers, flowers and more flowers. The very coarseness of the Svehla Agricultural School, an enormous building pressed back from the street, was softened by the trees, the grass, the flowers that surrounded it. The tobacco factory, a state enterprise, employing four hundred people, with its spacious grounds, its tall trees, its lawns and flower-beds loomed from the distance more like a castle than a factory. Even the convenience in the public square was adorned with a magnificent willow tree and silver pines and a plot of grass studded with bushes and flowers.

I went to the old town on top of the hill. It was built by Zhizhka over five hundred years ago and at every step one could breathe history. Here was the Zhizhka Square, where the Taborites once held their mass meetings, planned their military campaigns, assembled their armies, waged their spiritual struggles with each other. Here Zhizhka and Prokop *holj* (the beardless), the priest who succeeded Zhizhka after his death, had made speeches and called on their brethren to go forth and smite the foe. Here in a frenzy of fervour men and women emptied their hands and their pockets of valuables—coins and jewelry, their contribution to the war-chest of the militant brotherhood.

Now the square was deserted. The 16th Century Catholic church loomed vast and white out of the huge and dense chestnut trees. The Town Hall, with its Renaissance gables, was empty and dark; so were the museums and the modern Commissary of Finance, so modern that in the midst of the monuments and relics of the far away it stood out like an anachronism.

I looked at Zhizhka's monument in the middle of the square. Sword in one hand, dagger in the other, helmet on head, cloth over his blind eye, his enormous moustaches curling beyond his cheeks, an expression of sturdy reserve in his sharp-featured, high-cheeked face, he inspired neither reverence nor terror. Not even his knight's armour and the Polish *kontush* (overcoat) with the enormous sleeves at the sides, made him formidable. Yet during his life he was as ruthless as he was brilliant. A real crusader, he showed no mercy to those brethren who in his judgment had strayed from the righteous path. Thus when the Adamites, a small sect of Taborites, had carried their communism into the realm of sex and walked about naked and whored indiscriminately, Zhizhka was so angry that he ordered their extermination by fire and sword.

The city which he had built was intended not merely as a place for homes but as a military fortress. The streets radiated from the square like spokes from the hub of a wheel, only they ran not in straight but in zigzag lines to make impossible long-range shooting and to provide Taborite soldiers with invisible shelters from which they could suddenly swoop on the advancing foe. To this day the streets have retained their original layout, nor is any one allowed to convert them into modern avenues.

The buildings, though renovated and rebuilt, have conformed to the original style of architecture. Low and thick-walled, with the windows often barely rising above the pavement, they give the impression of closeness inside. Yet from the glimpses which I caught through open windows, the rooms seemed spacious and comfortable. Some houses were lighted by lamps, some by candles. The streets were electrified, and I passed one house where I saw a woman leaning out of the window reading a book by a street lamp hanging from the eave above her. There were no pavements on these winding streets, and the cobbles sloped towards the centre to provide drainage. Uneven and unshapely, they billowed along like wind-

swept waters in a river, and now, with their surfaces washed by rain and with little pools shimmering out of cuplike declivities, the image gained in vividness, especially where the lights were bright. Some of the streets were so narrow that by stretching my arms I could touch the houses on both sides—too narrow for the passage of a horse and wagon or any conveyance except a bicycle. The cobbles were so thick and solid that my footsteps resounded with an explosive echo, frightening cats into flight and accentuating the calm that had come with dusk upon these once turbulent avenues.

Ages lay between the new Tabor in the lowlands and the old Tabor on the hill. The streets, the buildings, the very sounds and smells, belonged to different epochs—centuries apart from one another. Yet the Taborite love of trees and grass and flowers was as brilliantly manifest in the old town as in the new. Out of high-fenced yards loomed the tops of trees now and then sprinkled as with jewels by the light of an overhanging street lamp. Wherever there was a spare piece of earth it grew something—grass, shrubs, trees. Out of windows, out of doorways, out of roofs, flowers fairly tumbled on the pedestrian. Masses of sweet peas fell like variegated ribbons out of the built-in troughs, yet as in the new town no one laid a hand on a single vine. Outside of houses at doorsteps stood tubs with shrubs in bloom and not a leaf or petal showed the least trace of damage. Here flowers were more than a pleasure—they were a cult which it was blasphemy to molest.

It was near midnight when I found myself again in the Zhizhka square. Suddenly I heard strains of music, and I saw in blue lights the name of a café. I walked inside. A group of soldiers with glasses of beer before them were singing. Farther away a party of middle-aged men were playing cards, drinking beer, puffing at long-stemmed pipes. In another room was a dance floor with a little platform for the musicians and a row of open booths for guests. In one booth sat three girls, in another a man with greyish hair. The girls were listening to the orchestra—which consisted of a violin and a piano—and the man with folded arms on his breast was dozing over his tumbler of wine.

"It's pretty quiet here," I said to the waiter when he came to take my order. "Are you a stranger here?" he asked. "Yes." "Oh, well, this is Tabor, nothing ever happens here any more." "At one

time," I said, "this place roared with excitement." "That was so long ago that the people here don't even like to be reminded of it."

"Are you a native of this town?"

"No, sir," he answered with pride, "I come from Pisek," which was only a short distance away. I laughed. In their local patriotism Czechs were no different from people in the small towns in America in which I had lived—the neighbouring town never was as good as the home town.

Saturday evening there was a dance in the café of the leading hotel, new and modern and superbly equipped. The place was crowded but no one wore evening clothes except the waiters. A number of the young men didn't wear ties. One youth, evidently fresh from the tennis court, wore sandals and white shorts. Nobody paid any attention to him.

Boys came alone or with friends of their own age, girls came with their mothers. A respectable girl in Tabor wouldn't be seen even in the most respectable dance hall alone with a man, unless he was her brother or some other close relative. If a young man invited her to a dance, *maminka* had to come along too. There were a number of such trios in the café, sitting together, chatting quietly, laughing, obviously happy. When the waiter came over I observed that a girl and her mother would order beer while the boy would ask for soda water! No doubt he was a member of the local Sokol and took to heart the admonitions against drinking and smoking—so at least the head waiter told me. Here then was a code of social behaviour that was a compound of old-fashioned convention and modern liberalism.

At last the orchestra struck up a tune—"swing music" was what a billboard strung across the stage announced, but it had none of the rhythm and the gaiety of American swing music. On and on the orchestra played and not a couple rose from their seats. I wondered why, and asked the waiter. "Our people like to hear a little music before they start dancing."

Then some of the lights went out and at once the couples moved towards the floor. The dancing was the tamest I had ever seen, no cheek to cheek, or even shoulder to shoulder positions, and no movements other than slow and rhythmic treading backward and forward—steps which America had forgotten ages ago. Nor did the

young people seem eager for innovations. They were content enough with the chance to be in each other's embrace. Now and then they beamed on each other. The mothers too looked happy.

The weather was hot during my stay in Tabor and every afternoon I went for a swim to the Sokol bathing pavilion on the Jordan. Always the place was crowded with more women than men, especially with girls. Men came later after their day's work was finished. The bathing suits of the girls were a striking contrast to the style of their dancing. Not even Hollywood could boast of more modern bathing attire than these deep-bosomed, broad-hipped girls of Tabor were wearing. They were good divers and good swimmers, as good as the men, and in the water as well as on the grassy beach they played with men with no show of reserve or abashment. And yet the code of Tabor declared that it was improper for a girl to be seen either alone or with a man after about nine o'clock in the street or in any of the beautiful parks which draped the city in a raiment of green.

In the Masaryk House the girls who were spending their vacation there ran around the grounds in mere slips of garments. Their men friends could come and lie out in the sun beside them and run races and wrestle with them and hold their hands and play with their hair. Yet none of these girls would allow themselves to go to a dance with these men even when they were properly engaged to them, unless Mamma or some other woman went along. Girls might smoke cigarettes at home or in public places. They might drink beer, they might even drink brandy. But if a young man called on them in the evening in their own homes, *maminka* felt she had to be present during the visit.

"D'yous ever have a chance to be alone with a man after sundown?" I asked a girl who was a junior in Prague University.

"Well, she said smiling, "now and then Mother runs out to the kitchen."

"Deucedly middle class," said a Russian journalist to whom I spoke of the social code of Tabor. Middle class it certainly is, as is or was so much of the civilization of Czechoslovakia.

During my travels in Russia whenever I visited a village or town

that had a bazaar I never missed seeing it. Humour, pathos, acrimony, generosity, eloquence, sociability, all spill out of Russian bazaars like water out of a tap. When, therefore, I learned that there was a bazaar in Tabor on the Zhizhka Square I hastened to visit it.

That Tabor was not in Russia became evident after only a glimpse at the bazaar. No meat on the hoof was sold. There were no squealing pigs in sacks, no roosters in boxes, no calves with fettered feet on the ground or in straw-filled carts, no cows hitched to fence posts; no animals at all except the horses, the donkeys, and now and then a team of dogs hitched to wagons, and the fish that swam about in deep troughs and that were sold alive and dressed before the customer. Meat was nowhere on sale—the law forbade it, for no meat could be offered to customers unless the animal was properly examined and certified, and such meat could be purchased only in butcher shops. Milk likewise was not on sale, also because no milk could be sold unless it was approved. In Russia to this day, especially in the smaller towns, people buy most of their meat and much of their milk foods in the bazaar.

These Czechs farmers who come to the bazaar had an abundance of produce. On this particular day they had brought more than ever because they were contributing the proceeds to the nation's defence fund, and they would have no Taborite say that they were lacking in patriotism. Cabbage, cauliflower, onions, cucumbers, string beans, beets, carrots, radishes, plums, oranges, cherries, gooseberries, wild strawberries, mushrooms, lay in heaps, in tiers, in boxes on wagons and on market tables, all washed and gleaming. Nowhere among buyers was there any pushing, any wrangling, any loud talking. Nothing like the wild scramble and the loud articulateness at a Russian bazaar. Prices were written in chalk and purchasers knew that haggling was unnecessary. No matter how crowded the stands or wagons might be people waited patiently until their turn came. One man with a load of new tender-skinned potatoes was so busy that his face was scarlet and sweat poured down his cheeks in a steady stream. Customers flocked to his wagon. It seemed as though everybody in Tabor wanted to buy his potatoes. Yet neither he nor his customers ever gave vent to harsh or indignant language.

The orderliness of buyers was matched by the orderliness of the sellers. The women wore clean white aprons. When they soiled their hands they wiped them, not on their apron, but on a towel. The men were clean shaven, none were bearded. Some of them had dressed up in collar and tie, Sunday shirt and Sunday shoes. One man, tall and handsome and smooth-shaved, with an upstanding collar and tie and wearing a straw hat and a black silk coat, made me think of the preacher that I knew when I lived on a farm in the central part of New York state. Perhaps this man was a preacher. Hussites don't mind working their land week days and preaching the word of God on Sundays. Quietly, joyfully, smiling all the time, he sold heads of cabbage and cucumbers with no less zest than he might preach a sermon. He radiated cheer and good fellowship in a manner that seemed oddly out of harmony with the reserve, indeed the taciturnity, that the Czech so often displays when he is among strangers.

Out of one wagon a middle-aged woman was selling watermelons. Children gathered around her to buy slices of them. As she was cutting up an unusually ripe and luscious melon she dropped a huge slice into the wagon box. Quickly she picked it up and threw it into a refuse basket. She made no effort, as a Russian peasant might, to scrape the dirt off and either sell it or put it away to be eaten in a leisurely moment. I passed a stand heaped with freshly washed beets and carrots, with not a single customer. The woman in attendance sat on a bench and knitted a sweater. She made no attempt to attract buyers. It's not the way of a Czech—even a peasant in a bazaar—to drum up trade.

Yet as I browsed about I ran into a scene that might have been enacted at a Russian bazaar or at an American county fair. Standing under a canvas top was a young man superbly groomed and smartly dressed. He talked so rapidly and with such emotion that at first I had difficulty in understanding him. His handsome smooth shaven face and his freshly pressed summer suit, added weight to his oration. In the midst of a barrage of words he was sprinkling brownish powder over little pieces of sugar which he passed around. I too helped myself to a piece. The powder looked like cinnamon but tasted like nothing at all. Well, the powder had magic in it, medicinal magic, so the youth assured us. Behind him hung a

huge canvas on the top of which was the figure of an athlete beaming with happiness, and on the bottom of which was the figure of an invalid writhing in agony. The inscription beneath the top figure read in Czech "new strength--new life." Beneath the lower figure there was no inscription. The man's bulging eyes and distorted face spoke more eloquently than could words. "Now then," thundered the youth in the manner of a man calling on people to choose between salvation and damnation, "D'you want to be like this man?" pointing to the athlete, "Or like this man?" pointing at the invalid. "It is all in your power. If you want to be like this man," again pointing to the athlete, "I can show you how. This powder will cure every ailment you've ever heard of. Headaches, sleeplessness, trembling hands, sour stomach, backaches, weak knees--any ailment you have or expect to have will disappear like magic--and more too--you young girls--and you mothers who have young girls--and are worried about their complexions--listen to me--these capsules of my powder will give any one the finest complexion in the world--just look at me, haven't I a healthy complexion? It's because not a day passes but I take my two capsules, one in the morning and one in the evening . . . Why, girls, you'll never need any rouge if you take my capsules, never, nor will you need to get down on your knees and say, 'O, dear God, give me a good complexion.' My powder will work a miracle with your insides and with your face. Who'll buy a bottle--six crowns--only six crowns."

Woman after woman paid six crowns and bought a bottle of the magic capsules.

"You must meet our *starosta* (Mayor)," said the head waiter of my hotel. Thereafter every one I met repeated the words of the head waiter, until they rang in my ears. But the *starosta* was the most elusive personage in the community. He had an office and he was supposed to be there during certain hours but whenever I went there or called on the telephone he was out. "He is everywhere and nowhere," joked one of his assistants, "but I'll try to fix up an appointment for you."

Finally I met the *starosta*. Tall, wiry, with a sunburned face and a heavy chin, he looked more like a man accustomed to the plough

than to the desk in an office. But he had no more than started speaking when I sensed in him a real go-getter. The man lived for only one purpose—to make Tabor the best, the biggest, the most beautiful, the most famous, the happiest town in the country. Figures dripped out of him. At the beginning of the Republic the population of Tabor was 16,000, now it had grown to 18,000, and the end was not yet, for with the improvement of living conditions the population was rising like a plant in well-watered soil. Tabor was the home of one of the largest state-owned tobacco factories which turned out annually one and a half billion cigarettes. The town boasted one of the finest malt plants in the world and its products were shipped to all corners of the earth including the United States. It had a mechanized creamery, a sawmill, a number of small industries, but it discouraged big industry. The people didn't want the town spoiled by too many smoke stacks and too much machinery. On the western slopes of the town a whole new residential section had been built with villas that could hold their own in beauty and comfort with any in the world, and with gardens and flower-beds that were unrivalled anywhere.

But, said the wiry *starosta*, the town was especially proud of its fourteen schools, in which were taught 4500 pupils, and not even Prague could boast of better schools or better teaching staffs. That was why so many people in Tabor spoke German as well as Czech and some had a fluent command of French and English. Not a person in the town was illiterate. There were twenty-three policemen on the roll call of the police department and on the payroll of the city. But—did I ever see them around? Of course not. Not even he, the *starosta* with all the walking he did every day all around the town saw much of them, because six out of every seven of them were having a vacation. It was just as well, because there was so little for the police to do. The town hardly knew any crime. There had been no murder in years and years, not since the time when a woman choked a baby to death because she was too poor to feed it.

Nor did any Taborite suffer from real distress. The unemployed were given work by the town and if they were unfit for labour they lived off their social insurance. It was impossible for any one to starve in Tabor or to miss the opportunity to send his children through a vocational school or gymnasium. The worker had as

good a chance to educate his sons and daughters as the business man. Many of those who were employed in the tobacco factory were now living in modern apartments at rentals that were lower than for the old houses. The state had built blocks of such houses for work-people. . . . No, they had no foreigners in the towns, just one or two German families. The several hundred Jews in Tabor were mostly Czech Jews who had lived in the town since the seventeenth century. Their children attended Czech schools and used the Czech language as their native tongue. There were seven religious congregations in the community, one founded not long ago by American missionaries and known as Mormon—had I heard of it? Most of the people in Tabor were Roman Catholics but religion was the citizen's private affair. There were as many political parties in the town as there were religious congregations. The town was especially proud of its Tabor beer, as good as Pilsen, perhaps better, and its *vycheps* or beer halls. There were 57 of them and they sold every year 40,000 hectolitres of beer, or 8,000,000 glasses, making an average of 444 glasses for every man, woman and child!

But more than beer-drinking flourished in Tabor. Literature too was flourishing. The town swarmed with authors, and all of them could find a place for their writings, for there were seven weekly publications in Tabor, one bi-weekly journal, three monthly magazines and one scientific quarterly. As the *starosta* of the community it was his task to uphold all good causes. That was why he was continually seeking to persuade the Prague Government to do its duty by Tabor. Of course some of the Prague officials made a wry face when they saw him enter their offices. "Here comes the yellow peril," they would say. "The yellow peril—not bad, eh?" And the wiry *starosta* roared with laughter.

From the *starosta* I learned that Taborites are, like Americans, "joiners." I doubt if any town of similar size in America has a more active woman's club than the Tabor *Zora*. It has a membership of 300, and like such clubs in America it arranges lectures and musicals, engages in welfare work and devotes an inordinate amount of time to the preservation of ancient Czech costumes. It is the duty and ambition of every member of the *Zora* to have at least one costume in her wardrobe.

Here is a list of Tabor's societies:

3 Dramatic societies, one of which had celebrated recently its eightieth anniversary.

9 Dramatic sections in societies devoted to other purposes.

41 Benefit societies which also promoted social and cultural activities.

5 Musical.

8 Economic.

9 Religious.

23 Sport.

7 Political.

6 Political affiliates of societies whose main purpose is other than politics.

65 Occupational, ranging all the way from school teachers to caretakers of parks and cemeteries.

In all there are 186 social organizations in Tabor. Dr. Kroupa, the director of the Zhizhka Museum, retains membership in thirty of them and is president of six. The *starosta* was the chief "joiner" with membership in fifty societies to all of which he paid dues.

"And of how many are you president?" I asked.

"I never bothered to count up," and he laughed.

I was taking lessons in Czech from a young school teacher. She was of medium height with dark hair, dark eyes and a very serious expression. She dressed in mourning. One afternoon I invited her to go for a walk and on our way back as we passed my hotel I invited her to come into the coffee shop. "Oh, no," she said, "I'm in mourning. My father has been dead only five months."

Five months and still as much in mourning as though he had just passed out of life!

"Do all Czechs mourn as long as that?"

"In this town we do, for at least a year."

"And during the year they stay away from everything that might cheer them?"

"We do, my mother, my sister and I."

"You don't even go to the movies or a café?"

"Oh, no, I wouldn't think of it."

"You don't try to forget your grief?"

"It would be wrong to forget it."

A few days later she invited me to walk with her to a nearby village. As we emerged from the town she said :

"Would you mind if we go up the cemetery? I haven't been there to-day."

"Do you go every day?"

"Yes, every day."

"And for how long?"

"For a year, after that not so regularly."

Her father's grave was set out with little rose bushes.

"I loved him so," she said, and stooped down to pluck out a few of the dead blades of grass. Then she stood up and looked contemplatively at the square-cornered mound before her. On nearby graves I saw lights burning, glass jars filled with paraffin and with lighted wicks.

"What are these lights for?" I asked.

"Lights of mourning or remembrance."

"There's none on your father's grave," I said.

"It burned out yesterday and to-morrow morning I shall bring another and keep it burning."

"For how long?"

"For a year at least." After a pause she added, "A year is a short enough time to be thinking daily of someone you loved so much."

Then averting her face she said : "I won't cry now. I don't want you to see me in tears." We walked away.

We followed a winding country road through the wheat-fields. Cornflowers gleamed in the wheat and the air was a-twitter with the song of birds. Behind us was the town—dark now in the distance, and ahead out of the valley shone the white cottages of the village. The balmy quiet of the countryside—a quiet not of death and stagnation but of life and growth, dissipated the gloom of my companion. She hummed a tune and now and then she stooped down to pick a flower.

Dr. Frantishek Kroupa was the director of the Zhizhka Museum in Tabor. His bright eyes, lively manner and melodious voice would make the most taciturn caller cheerful. Scholar, linguist, humanitarian, he has been one of the great cultural influences, not only in

Tabor, but in Czechoslovakia. He is one of the few men I have ever met who never makes a statement about an historical event without offering authority for his words. I saw him often during my visit in Tabor and one evening he invited me to go with him to his favourite *vychep*.

We walked along the quay, a broad avenue rising high over the Luzhnitse. A terrace set with trees, shrubs and flowers sloped down to the gurgling river. The starry night, the fragrance in the air, the twinkle of lights in the valley below, made me say, "This is one place where people ought to live a long long time—a hundred years at least."

"Of course we are only human," said the cheerful doctor.

"But you are so privileged here—food straight from the land, gorgeous scenery, sunny days, cool nights, rivers to swim in, and tennis courts, athletic fields; every one seems so healthy. Why some of your young men won't even drink their own Tabor beer."

"No, they won't, that's true, and it's good too."

"Doesn't anybody ever get drunk here, really drunk?"

"Very seldom." Then just as we turned the street, we bumped into two young men, clinging to each other and stumbling from side to side, quite drunk.

"They are not ours," the director hastily assured me. "Our Tabor boys don't get drunk."

I continued to look at the stumbling youths. One was more drunk than the other and every few steps he slid over the cobbles and nearly fell when the other managed quickly to hold him up.

"At any rate," I added, "I cannot write that I haven't seen *any* drunken people in your town."

We reached the beer hall. It was located in a very old building that showed traces of Gothic and Renaissance. It was the beer hall of the elite of the town. Here came professors, writers, preachers, engineers, physicians and others of the intelligentsia. Here were billiard tables, card tables, chess boards—and racks loaded with newspapers. For, as in Prague, not a visitor comes in but he is immediately offered an armful of newspapers. A man can sit for hours all day and all evening over one glass of beer and read or write, or just sit and talk with friends. We ordered black Tabor beer.

"It's wonderful beer . . ." said the director with pride.

"And everybody here drinks it?" I said. "I mean even school teachers and preachers and their wives?"

"And why shouldn't they? Don't teachers and preachers in America and their wives drink beer?"

"In some places in America it wouldn't be considered quite proper."

"But they go to the movies and see pictures like the one we saw—just drenched with 'lemonade' (love scenes)?"

"Yes."

"Isn't it strange—to see 'lemonade' on the screen is proper and to drink beer is improper—I don't understand it."

"Yes, it is strange," I said and I was tempted to add, "But no more so than your Tabor code which allows a girl the right to dance on Sundays, to drink beer in a public place, to smoke in a public place, to wear the most abbreviated bathing suit at the Sokol beach, and yet holds it improper for her to see a man without *maminka's* chaperonage!" But I held my tongue and waited for the learned doctor to enlighten me further on Tabor's way of life.

"I'm on vacation now," he resumed. "It gives me a chance to get outdoors and to catch up with my reading. You have no idea how busy I am in winter."

"But you don't have many tourists in your museum in winter, do you?"

"No, but in winter I have meetings and lectures."

"Don't you like lecturing?"

"Oh, yes, I like it, but it's so expensive. Yes, quite expensive," he repeated with emphasis.

"But don't you get paid for lecturing?"

"Of course not; and I pay for my own beer, too."

"And do you deliver many lectures?"

"Last year I delivered about thirty or thirty-five, and two years ago I delivered over sixty."

"And you didn't get paid once—even when you went out of town?"

"Of course not—when I give a lecture out of town I get my railroad fare only, and when they charge admission I pay mine too."

"No!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, yes," nodded the doctor earnestly, "and sometimes I pay even more than the people who come to hear me. That happens when I lecture before a society to which I belong or in which I am especially interested. Then I am expected to pay a higher admission fee than my hearers."

Here was something new in the world—incredibly new.

The Taborites of old would go off to fight and die for their faith, singing this stirring hymn :

1. *Ye Warriors who serve the Lord, interpreting His way,  
Beseech Him for His timely help, with trust toward Him  
pray:  
That in the end, Victory comes in His great day.*

*Christ has promised for your losses one-hundred-fold to repay.  
Whoso gives his life for His sake will know that Eternal Day.  
Blest are the soldiers who follow His true way.  
The Lord commands you: be not sore afraid of them that kill;  
To die for love of neighbour is according to His will.*

2. *Ye Knights and Bowmen think on Him who remembers you all;  
Ye lowly ones, with pikes and flails, who answer His just call.  
God is most generous whatever may befall.*

*Count not your foes, nor fear their power, nor flee when they draw nigh.*

*Keep in your hearts and by your hearths the Lord God from on high.*

*Face to the foemen e'en though you must die.*

*In days of old our forefathers have sung this song and said:  
"The Master good, to horse and horsemanship good, surely is wed."*

3. *Ye men with wagons, following, heed carefully your soul.  
Risk not the Cause for greed or gold, forgetful of the whole.  
Halt not to plunder. Remember the true goal.*

*Keep in your minds the Watchword true, which now to you is given.*

*Whoe'er commands, obey His word, that your ranks be not riven.*

*Each man for all men, for truth common, hath striven.*

*So sing Ye boldly! Forward! Faithful, marching Zionward.*

*Strong arms, and hands, and hearts, and minds, cry out  
“Our God! Our Lord!”*

“Remember the true goal,” was the watchword of the Taborites, and as I was making ready to depart I asked myself whether Tabor of to-day was a fulfilment of the Tabor of old? I was warned by Doctor Kroupa and by the scholarly Doctor Chalupny and by others that ideas, institutions, achievements, like everything else in life were only relative and that in my final estimate of the civilization and humanity of the town I should make allowances for this.

Still for all its middle-class spirit, Tabor has remained loyal to its ancient heritage. The common man, however poor, has as much a right to an education as his wealthy neighbour, nor are women discriminated against in the pursuit of learning. The proletarian is not subject to disabilities, legal or social, that might breed in him a sense of inferiority. The blacksmith opposite my hotel, like the peasants who brought their produce on Wednesdays and Saturdays to the market place, never felt that he had to abase himself when he spoke to the *starosta*, to Doctor Kroupa or to any of the high army officers. At the Sokol bathing beach young working men associated with young people of middle-class parentage with an utter sense of equality. Afternoons on the balcony in the café of the leading hotel one could see a Jewish lawyer or merchant playing chess with a Roman Catholic priest or a Protestant professor or an Atheist writer. Of course some people deep inside of them cherished a feeling of hostility to Jews, but they made neither a virtue nor a public demonstration of this feeling, and more of the young Jews and Gentile were learning to fit themselves into each other's good fellowship even to the point of intermarriage.

Above all the Taborite has remained loyal to the Heritage of John

Huss in matters of religion. Again and again I heard people say: "I am a Roman Catholic but I am also a Hussite." They meant that while loyal to the Roman Church they were also devoted to the Hussite tradition of democracy, freedom and equality. Once a new priest, who didn't know the spirit of his congregation, spoke sharply of John Huss on the occasion of the anniversary of his birth. Afterwards a large number of parishioners resigned from that church. They had not ceased to be Roman Catholics. But they would not tolerate aspersion on the man they considered no enemy of the Church but a great liberator of his people.

Indeed, one Taborite scholar told me that some day the Roman Catholic Church might canonize John Huss. It had happened before, he said; Joan of Arc for example.

I saw the listing according to religion of the students and the teachers in one of the leading Tabor middle schools—the Real-schule. What especially caught my eyes was the word *confessionlos*—without religion. This might mean anything from agnosticism to atheism. Out of a student body of nearly 700, 48 were registered as *confessionlos*, and out of 31 members of the faculty six were registered as "without religion," three men and three women.

"Doesn't the Ministry of Education in Prague or the local Board of Education regard with suspicion an applicant for a teaching position who professes no faith?" I asked the director of one of the schools.

"Not in the least," was his reply. "What we want is good teachers and their religion is a matter of their own conscience."

"And this is a middle-class town—conspicuously so?" I asked again.

"Yes, I suppose so."

The term middle-class in Tabor as well as in all Czechoslovakia had assumed a new meaning for me.

## Chapter V

### THE PRESENCE OF A MAN

"WHEN you get to my home town, you'll think you're back in America."

The town in question was Zlin and the speaker was a clerk in the Zlin Court.

"What is so particularly American about your town?" I asked.

"When you get there you'll see with your own eyes," he answered. Caution, even in the use of language is another Czech characteristic.

I remembered his words driving from Otrowitse, my last railroad stop, to Zlin. It was Sunday afternoon and the highway buzzed with traffic. But what impressed me most forcibly was not the unusual number of cars but the bill-boards along the highway. This, indeed, was like America. On one side were American and English and on the other only Czechoslovak bill-boards. "The Yankees of Central Europe," someone had dubbed the Czechs, and when it came to cluttering the highways the Czechs in the Zlin region were superb Americans.

As I was drawing near to Zlin I saw in the distance a sign hung across the street reading: "Safety above all else"—another piece of Americanism. Then as I drove on I saw more evidence of what a Czech like my friend, the court clerk, would designate as Americanism. Here, for example, was the new Batya Administration Building—still unfinished, but fifteen stories high. Farther on was the square with the immense Spolechensky Dum (Social House) crowning the crest of a hill and ten stories high. Lower down were the Batya department stores, ten stories high; and sloping upward in the midst of lawns, shrubs, trees, flowers, were rows of more buildings, of red brick with towering windows and four and five stories high. Not a building anywhere but was on all sides exposed to sun and wind and commanded a superb view of the town and of the wooded hills that rose like mighty sentinels over this dynamic Zlin civilization.

It was all bright and clean and stirring, this factory-town celebrated all over Europe. But I inevitably recalled Karel Capek's play, R.U.R., not cynically, but merely as a portrait of standardized humanity. It was my first glimpse of Zlin and I knew nothing as yet of its life and its people, but the town itself, the part before me, was as if stamped in a mould. Farther on, beyond the square, were more buildings, rows and rows of them, the homes of workers and executives and these too with their red brick and their monotony of design seemed to have come out of a mould.

There were three kinds of accommodation in the hotel, single rooms at 20 crowns a day (half a crown), double rooms at 30 crowns a day and apartments at 65 crowns or about ten shillings a day. Ten per cent was added as a service charge. I took a single room, and as I was going up in the elevator, I pictured myself cooped up in a tiny cubicle.

After all what could any one expect for half a crown a day even in Zlin? I no more than stepped through the door than I realized I had been wrong. Here was no cubicle, no cell, but a real room, with a vestibule, a spacious cupboard and modern appointments; hangers attached to a shaft and with more of them on the wall; a shiny steel-framed shoe-stand with a horn and a yellow cloth; an immense mirror, a utility stand, a shiny grey steel bed with mattress, sheets, blankets, pillow but no spread; a radiator, a telephone, a table, one chair with pipelike steel arms and with the seat and the back made of orange-coloured canvas; a bathroom with a deep tub; a wash basin, a gadget fastened to the wall for a rainy umbrella, and a square tin can on the floor below for the dripping water; a mirror, a bench, a toilet; an immense window with a view of the square, the factories, the valley, the hills beyond—a sweeping view giving one a feeling of space, brightness, comfort. Well, this too was Americanism!

A mechanized standardized community!—Yet the people here, whoever they were—President of the industries, high-salaried executives, stenographers, skilled workers, pick and shovel labourers—never lifted their eyes but they could see sky and hills and trees and grass. Here the machine with all its triumphs had neither degraded nature nor crowded it out of man's vision.

But I wondered about my room—20 crowns a day and so much

space and such a clutter of gadgets and conveniences. Perhaps though it was all devoid of serviceability. No, there was nothing faulty with the bed; the springs did not even sag. The chair held together. Well, I would try the nerve centre of the place—its plumbing. The water gushed out of the tap, hot and cold. The plumbing was no bluff. Nothing was wrong anywhere and only 20 crowns a day and the place with its 300 rooms, its restaurants and roof garden actually paying dividends!

It was Sunday and the factories were shut. In Zlin they are also shut on Saturday, for since 1933 the five-day week and the eight-hour labour day or the forty-hour week have been law, not Czechoslovak law, but Batya law. Groups of young people promenaded along the winding lanes, boys by themselves, girls by themselves. The square reminded me of a college campus. The illusion of campus gained momentum from the presence of the vast numbers of young people, simply dressed and well mannered. They chattered and laughed but not too loudly. Many of them went into the building of the department store, the middle floors of which were occupied by a group of restaurants, so I went in too, and mounting the stairway I saw a huge sign that read: "How many calories does a worker need?" And beneath came the statistical answer:

Office workers from 2300 to 2700 calories.

Light workers from 2800 to 3200 calories.

Heavy workers from 3200 to 4000 calories.

Then followed a variety of sample meals with the requisite amount of calories.

Breakfast:

White coffee . . . = 109 calories.

2 slices of bread . . = 524 calories.  
(Czech slices)

Egg . . . . = 379 calories.

1012 calories.

## Lunch or Dinner:

Beef soup . . . =	170 calories.
Beef . . . . . =	229 calories.
Mashed onions . . . =	168 calories.
Dumpling . . . =	270 calories.
	<hr/>
	837 calories.

## Supper:

Dumpling and eggs =	825 calories.
Half liter milk . . . =	650 calories.
Bread . . . . =	216 calories.
	<hr/>
	1691 calories.

Sum total for the day = 3540 calories.

This sample menu was intended to serve as a guide only, and didn't end the lesson in dietetics. On another sign were the printed menus of meals for the whole week. At the top of each menu was the name of the chief cook, who was the real master of the floor over which he supervised. These cooks, so I quickly learned, were in competition with each other as to the quality and variety of the foods they prepared. The menu therefore for the whole week intrigued me and I scanned it carefully. For lunch there were three choices of soup, four or five vegetables, and the inevitable Czech dumplings. The cook who excelled in his appeal to the palates of the thousands of people whom he fed, found his reward in a larger share of the profits, which resulted from the increased patronage of his dining-rooms. In Russia he would have been proclaimed a Stakhanovite, and might have been decorated with a Lenin order.

Though the hour was long past lunch, a steady trickle of customers, all young people, flowed into the restaurants. The attendants wore uniforms, the girls light-blue dresses and white aprons, the men white jackets and white aprons. They were busy enough, especially at the milk counter, for the drinking of milk especially among boys seemed almost a rite here. The reason was

understandable enough. Most of these boys came from the land, and in their homes milk foods were an important item in their everyday meals, and besides, there had been incessant propaganda to popularize milk products. "The more milk the better your health," read a poster in the rear of the dairy counter. "Milk foods make a good and cheap supper," read another poster.

I bought a bottle, more than a pint, pasteurized and certified, and I paid only one crown—about twopence. Coffee and tea, hot or iced (another Americanism known only in Zlin) cost only half a crown a cup. Pastries were also cheap and the size of the portions large enough to satisfy a gourmand.

"Do you serve beer?" I asked one of the attendants.

"Not here," she said earnestly.

"Is it forbidden?"

"Absolutely," and after eyeing me with commiseration she said: "But you can get beer at the hotel."

At half-past five, supper time, I went back to the restaurant. Young people were coming in crowds, and since this was a self-help restaurant, they queued up before the service tables. Nobody had to wait long to be served. By my watch I waited only a little over a minute. The dexterity of the attendants was wondrous to watch. At one service table a supper of ham, bread, gravy, or of cucumber, veal cutlet and bread could be had for the equivalent of threepence in English money. Pork, dumpling and cabbage cost fourpence; fried chops, potato salad, gravy, only sixpence; a heaping plate of hot mashed potatoes with two cups of cold sour milk and two pieces of pastry threepence. The sight of the steaming potatoes and the shimmering cups of sour milk stirred my appetite, for during my childhood in a Russian village it was the cold sour milk and the hot potatoes which we ate every day that kept us in sturdy health. I also remembered my visit to the home of a Polish professor in Posen. I stayed for dinner and for dessert we were served immense portions of hot boiled potatoes and cold sour milk! Slavs seem partial to this humble food which to the Englishman or the American sounds hopelessly uneatable. At Zlin it was especially popular with the girls—they queued up in crowds at the counter serving it. I followed their example and then sat down at a table with them. In my clumsy Czech I explained to them

that Americans didn't relish the combination which they and I were eating with such zest. My words more than surprised them. Perhaps then, Zlin was not as American as they had imagined. I assured them that in the matter of food it was wholly Slav or Czech and not at all American.

After dusk I went for a walk on the slopes of the hill that overlooked the old town. I wound my way through street after street, up and down the hillside, past row after row of houses, the homes of the workers, and now and then of an executive. The workers' houses were of two kinds, of one and of two apartments, of the same size and style—red brick with yellow paint on the woodwork. Nowhere was there a suggestion of the company town slum. The Zlin practice of providing abundant space for air and sunlight, and of building only two-story cottages precludes the possibility of slum neighbourhoods. Each house was separated from the other by a lawn set with shrubs, trees, and flowers.

I wondered what these houses were like inside. So when I passed a man sitting with folded arms on his lawn smoking a pipe, I stopped and spoke to him and asked if he would mind showing me around his apartment? Without rising from his seat, without even changing the position of his arms he called: "Marenka! Come here!" Presently a short stubby woman with a baby in her arms appeared at the doorway. Bowing and smiling she invited me to follow her. This was a two family house, she explained, and the apartments were divided vertically, each with a separate entrance. First she showed me the kitchen which was fitted out with a gas range and modern plumbing. Then she showed me the living-room and the bathroom, and then she led me upstairs and showed me the two bedrooms. Below the kitchen she said she had a basement for storage. She liked the apartment—it was more commodious and more civilized than her home in a Slovakian village. The only fault she found with it was the expense of heating it if the winter happened to be especially severe. But then she paid only a rental of 27 crowns or a little less than five shillings a week! Had she lived in a one-family house she would have had larger rooms, and an extra bedroom upstairs, a spacious vestibule at the entrance downstairs, and she would have paid 36 crowns a week. But then she had only one child and the apart-

ment was spacious enough for her and her husband, and if guests came, she also had a separate room for them. In her old home in the village it never happened, because people were always so crowded. She was content enough in Zlin, but her husband grumbled sometimes. The work was arduous—it sapped a lot of strength out of him. When they had saved enough money, they would go back to the country and get a place of their own and never again look at a factory. But they were really happy together, especially now that they had a little boy.

"Yes, darling?" she turned to the baby and kissed it and hugged it fondly to her breast. When I went out I saw the man still sitting on the lawn, his arms folded as before, his pipe in his mouth but no longer lighted, a picture of contented repose.

The hotel was brilliantly lighted. Strings of lights on the roof garden twinkled high over the earth and strains of music poured out in mounting waves of cheerfulness.

Presently I found myself on the roof. An orchestra was playing and the floor was jammed with dancing couples—young people, as well dressed as in any dancing resort in Prague. I danced with a girl who told me that she worked in the shoe factory and had been in Zlin over three years. Yes, she said, many factory girls came to the roof garden, especially on Saturday and Sunday evenings. I danced with another girl and she was a waitress in a factory restaurant. She, too, often came to the roof garden, always with girl friends, never with a man. She met her men friends there and danced with them, and only rarely would she allow any of them to escort her home.

The Zlin idea was not to tighten but to weaken social barriers. Batya himself had his home in a workers' district. His engineers and executives had built their homes in the same sections. Their houses were likewise built of red brick, though larger in size and more ornate in design. Money in Zlin did count, and yielded superior advantages. But it built no walls anywhere.

There were no special residential sections for moneyed people and if they wished to go to a café or a dance resort they had to patronize the same places to which shoemakers and floor-sweepers and waitresses went.

I leaned over the railing of the roof garden and gazed down on the town and the surrounding countryside. Lights shimmered in all directions and trees and far-away hills, so dark now, loomed in majestic somnolence. Over thirty years ago, so the court clerk of Zlin had told me in English, the town was "a stick in the mud." Now it was assuming the magnitude if not the spirit of a modern metropolis. It was a company town, Batya's town, a one-man town. Trade unionism was tabooed and organizers had been sternly discouraged. But the most fanatical trade unionist with all his disdain for employers like Batya, could not readily dismiss the sense of social equality that prevailed in Zlin.

For over three hundred years the Batyas had lived in the ancient and far-away town of Zlin and throughout this vast interval of time they had known only one trade—shoemaking. In the pre-Munich days, in their search for weapons with which to smite at any one of importance in Czechoslovakia, the Henleinists and Nazis had flung at Batya the charge that he was a Jew—and therefore—"loyal" Germans, so ran the appeal, should boycott his shoe stores. The boycott from the start was doomed to collapse, for even Nazis and Henleinists could not resist the temptation of buying reasonably-priced shoes for themselves and their families. Shortly before and during the days of the German occupation of the Sudetenlands, the troops as well as the throng of officials who came with them, flocked to Batya's shops and bought out all the shoes that were on sale there. However, in the museum that has been erected in memory of Thomas Batya, the founder of the Batya enterprises, there is a huge hand-printed poster giving the Batya genealogy for over three centuries, as far back as records go, and the Batyas have always been Roman Catholics.

Thomas Batya evinced a talent for shoemaking when he was only six years of age. From the scraps of leather which his father was throwing away he fashioned with his young hands diminutive shoes. At ten he lost his mother whom he loved dearly and now his father began in earnest to inculcate in him the importance of earning his own living. At fourteen he took charge of the sale of his father's shoes. He had also attended school in Zlin, a Czech school. Once a friend brought him a book—*The History*

*of the Bohemian People*—lavishly illustrated with pictures and with a text that differed markedly from the language he had learned to speak. But he became so engrossed in the book that during the lunch hour he would lie out on the grass and lose himself in its pages. It was a sad but heroic book, because the history of the Czech people was sad and heroic, and it roused in the boy a sturdy national consciousness.

At fifteen Thomas Batya went to Vienna, opened a shop and made shoes which nobody wanted to buy. In consequence he lost what little money he had saved and went back to his father and his old job of selling shoes. He journeyed to Prague and made a success. His courage mounted so high that in 1894 together with his brother and sister he started a business in Zlin. That was the beginning of the Batya enterprises.

But business was not the only problem that preoccupied young Thomas. He smarted from a sense of social inferiority. He saw the world divided into two classes—master and no master, and the masters made up the “good society” from which shoemakers, that is people like himself and his brother, were barred. But why? The question obsessed him, and people who knew him say that consciousness of the lowly position which he as a worker had endured, instead of driving him into a desperate effort to force his way into the class from which he was barred, only roused in him a passion to pursue in his own relations with men a policy of social equality. Hence the absence of social demarcation in present-day Zlin.

In 1904 Thomas Batya built his first factory in Zlin, but he felt the need of fresh knowledge and fresh stimulation, so he journeyed to America and entered a shoe factory as an ordinary workman. The American experience proved priceless, gave him a fresh comprehension of the mechanization of labour and of rational utilization of time, raw materials, and mechanical power. On his return home the Batya factories began to boom and reach out towards national and international markets. Since then the words Zlin and Batya have become known the world over. Batya has shoe factories not only in Zlin but in England, France, Holland, Germany, Jugoslavia, Switzerland, Poland, British India, and he ships his shoes to every corner of the earth, including the United

States. In Czechoslovakia in the pre-Munich days he operated 2084 shoe shops of his own, and would have opened more had not the Government in an effort to save other retailers from ruin, forbidden further sales expansion.

During the years of the world-wide economic depression Batya had feverishly been searching and finding fresh markets, particularly in the backward countries of the world, and on that account he had been saved from the grimmest of all troubles which the shoe industry like all others had been facing, namely unemployment. In recent years his name has become identified with the manufacture of aeroplanes, machinery, hosiery, chemicals, cardboard, bricks, lumber, artificial silk, rubber products, including automobile tyres, and unless Germany, now overlord of Czechoslovakia, commands a halt to further expansion, the process will push forward with unabated energy.

Not the least successful of Batya's enterprises is the publishing of newspapers, magazines and books. Indeed in the pre-Munich days Jan Batya, who since the death of his brother, Thomas, has assumed leadership of the business, was so hopeful of fresh development in his own and other industries in Czechoslovakia that he wrote a book in which he contended that in time the country would be able to offer a comfortable living to forty million people, almost three times the present number living there. Like the progressive-minded statesmen in his native land, Batya was envisaging a prosperous Czechoslovakia with an enormous increase in population, not through conquest but through internal social and economic development.

It is well of course to emphasize at this point that in a social and historical sense the Batya enterprises gained added importance from the fact that they are a result of Czech genius. Leaders are recruited from the ranks, and the ranks are overwhelmingly Czech and Slovak. The charge the Nazis had hurled at the Czechs—that they had never created anything of their own in any department of human activity and that the best which they had in their civilization had been borrowed from Germany and Germans, collapses completely in the face of the Batya enterprises. In finance, in technical development, in sales promotion and in social and educational policies, these enterprises have been the creation

of Czech energy and Czech intelligence. My chief reason for journeying to Zlin was to make a study of a community renowned the world over but almost exclusively the product of native enterprise.

Wherever I went in Zlin I was deluged with statistical tables. I have no intention of inflicting these on the reader. Yet some of them are impressive. Consider for example the output of shoes. In 1894 the Batya factories turned out daily 50 pairs of shoes, in 1920 the number had risen to 3000, and 1937 it soared to 180,000! In 1922 the average price of a pair of shoes was 220 crowns, but in 1935 it dropped to 33 crowns, the highest price now charged for the best quality of Batya shoes is 99 crowns a pair, which is the equivalent of about fifteen shillings.

In 1894 the population of Zlin was 2894, by 1938 it had risen to 43,660.

In 1920, the savings in Zlin banks amounted to 3 million crowns; in 1937 to 115 millions.

In 1925 the Batya industries in Czechoslovakia employed 5200 persons; and in 1938 the number of workers of all categories was 32,240.

Zlin is supposed to consume per capita more milk and more meat than any other community in the Republic.

The water supply, still scanty, was at one time a source of typhus; by 1935 there were 11 cases of typhus; in 1937 only 8.

There is not one illiterate person in all of the Batya enterprises.

Smoke, a perennial and insidious nuisance in many industrial communities, has through special devices been eliminated. Dust which in dry lands like Zlin rises in clouds on the least stir of wind, has likewise been banished, and of the mud which at one time had infested nearly every street in the town, not a vestige has remained. Late one night after a prolonged and fierce storm I walked all over the town and now and then in crossing a street I had to jump across the whirling waters that flowed down from the hills, but not once did I wade in mud. There was none.

Between 1931 and 1937 Zlin has set out 40,075 trees and 182,575 shrubs, chiefly in the workers' residential sections.

No other city in Czechoslovakia boasts of so many schools in proportion to its population as does Zlin, or of such complete and modern equipment, especially for vocational courses, for children and adults.

"We have no preconceived ideas on anything," said a spokesman of the Batya enterprises. "We're always willing to learn." Not many modern business organizations respond with as much alacrity and energy to new demands and new ideas as does Batya. Yet he would be the last person to claim originality for his way with production and labour. He has learned enormously from the contributions and the experiences of others. He has woven these into something, which if not wholly new, is at least distinctive.

Consider for example his attitude towards banks and credit. A "bank loan," Thomas Batya is quoted as having said, "is like an umbrella. When things go well and the sun shines, they let you keep it, and when things go badly and it rains, they take it away from you." There is in these words more than the peasants' distrust of the moneylender. There is in them a complete repudiation of one of the cardinal principles of modern business. Batya's initial experience with creditors who in time of disaster squeezed him into financial impotence and ruined him, had no doubt coloured his distrust of them. Hence the Batyas have been death on credit. They will have none, they will give none. Jan Batya is reputed to have declared that "credit is an axe which eventually chops off your head." The Batyas, therefore, pay as they buy, collect as they sell."

The business advantages from such a practice are obvious—it saves interest charges and offers indisputable privileges in the purchase of raw materials. "They are tough customers, these Batya buyers," I heard a German manufacturer say. "They whittle you down to the last crown, but they give you a big order and pay cash and you have security for yourself and your workers and that's a lot in business these days." And Jan Batya of course knows it, and so do his agents, and since the size of their orders keeps mounting continually, they can almost dictate the price of glass, hides, rubber, steel, textiles and the other products that they buy. Other shoe manufacturers who pay interest on loans and who

must submit to the existing market price of raw materials, are, therefore, at an initial disadvantage in their competition with Batya.

"The machine is eternally unfinished," said a Batya manager. On hearing these words I couldn't help thinking of a Bolshevik industrial manager in the Ukraine who told me that Sovietism was destined to conquer capitalism in the field of production if only because under a Soviet economy invention was neither thwarted nor "locked in a safe." But here was a capitalist who was a living denial of the Bolshevik indictment.

"I understand," I said to Jan Batya, "that you don't use much American machinery in your factory."

"I don't," he said, "for the simple reason that I don't care to rent machinery, which is what American manufacturers want. It is too expensive—and then I have to wait for new inventions to be put on the market." So Batya started his own laboratories and his own machine shops, which make much of the machinery he uses. Whenever a new invention proves itself, he hastens to put it into use. "In the long run the newest invention is the cheapest," said a Batya manager. Endless are the premiums which Batya offers to originators of new ideas in production. The scrapping of old machinery, however sound and durable, is not an expense if it can be supplanted by improved and more productive machines. The words "the machine is eternally unfinished," are more than a motto and a creed in Zlin. They are a weapon of continual triumph.

Batya is one of the world's most fervent planners. Long before the Russian had dramatized the word *plan*, Batya had made it one of the pillars of his business structure and of his philosophy of living. Every boy or girl who enters his shops is encouraged to plan his or her life a day, a month, a year, and longer ahead. The very notion of living up to a plan, of evolving it, thinking of it, fighting for it, fascinates Batya as much as it does the most impassioned Stakhanovite in Russia. Of course the Stakhanovite would scorn Batya's conception of the word as applied to personal accumulation and personal possession. To Batya this is a noble end in life, while to the Stakhanovite it spells the doom of man-

kind. But the word plan, I must emphasize, is no less a source of inspiration and calculation to Batya than to the most ardent Stakhanovite and Batya had espoused the idea of planning long before the world had heard of Stakhanovism. Not only every boy who comes to Zlin from some primitive village is taught the importance of a plan, but every worker, every group of workers, every shop, every office, every executive, follows a well-defined plan in all his daily activities. If circumstances demand it, the plan is altered. But a plan there must be everywhere for every one, and it must fit into the plan of the whole organization.

Every six months out of mountains of information that come to Zlin from all over the world, a basic plan for the whole enterprise is drafted. It is checked, studied, amplified, and when finally adopted, every person associated with the industry knows his duties and in a rough way, his possible rewards for the half year ahead. Raw materials are bought for the duration of that time. Markets are ready for the entire output of the period and a profit is to be made on every pair of shoes that is to come out of the shops. There are to be no accumulations of unsold goods, no stores of unused raw materials, no frozen investments of any kind. In other words there is to be no unused capital. Of course such a system of planning would be impossible without a far-flung and energetic sales organization and without a perfectly co-ordinizied mechanism of production. But Batya and his army of Czech managers and executives have both at their disposal. Mistakes occur often enough. A flood in China, an earthquake in a far-away region in the Orient, a revolution, a dictatorship, a war in this or that part of the world may upset schedules and calculations. But so immense and so powerful are the resources of the organization in finance and in human ingenuity that thus far it has safely withstood all unforeseen setbacks and misfortunes. Even the Munich debacle has failed seriously to disrupt the enterprise. To make up for the lost market in Sudetenland with its 600 retail shops, Batya at once launched into large scale manufacture of bicycles.

With his policy of no loans and no credit, his motto "the machine is eternally unfinished," and his system of half-year plans, Batya obviously enjoys a host of advantages over many of his competitors. There is another principle which he espouses, a plan

completely his own, that of the so-called "shop-autonomy," which gives him a still further advantage. All shops are divided into units and each unit has "autonomy,"—that is—it is an independent economic enterprise with its own system of production, finance and salesmanship. It buys from other shops, it sells to other shops. It inspects the goods it buys and if any of it is defective it has the right of rejecting it. Thus a defective sole or top never reaches the stage of a finished product. That helps in the elimination of waste. If any of the goods one shop sells to another is rejected, the loss is its own and is deducted from its accumulated profits.

The price of the goods that the shops charge each other is agreed upon beforehand and becomes law for everybody concerned. The schedules of wages are likewise worked out for half a year in advance. Of the profits that a shop may have from its business transactions, half is retained as a fund from which the price of damaged goods may be deducted. The management pays interest on this sum at the rate of ten per cent. Accounts are rendered once a week so that each of the 180 shops knows what its financial status is.

The purpose of "shop autonomy" is manifold. It is supposed to promote competition between shops. It enables the management to know at a glance where and how each shop stands, and if it is in a slump measures are launched to retrieve it to normality. Above all, "shop autonomy" is supposed to be an incentive to the workers to do their best work, for their earnings and profits depend solely on the quantity of their output.

"But what of the unskilled worker?" I asked a shop manager.  
"He is no participant in the profits."

"That's true," he answered, "but his aim is to become a skilled worker so that he can share in them, and that is a real incentive."

"Shop autonomy" also is supposed to eliminate all manner of waste of raw material, time, machine power. Vavrecka, one of the directors of the Batya enterprises and subsequently Minister of Propaganda in the national government is on record as saying that in no other shoe industry in the world is there such an economic use of materials as at Batya's.

Still no feature of the Batya industry has been a subject of such violent controversy as this scheme of "shop autonomy." Trade

unionists in Prague speak of it with bitterness. They do not deny its merits as a stimulant of production, but they deem it a menace to the worker's health and to his years of employability. Yet these trade union leaders, and now and then even Communists, speak with respect of the living conditions which workers in Zlin are enjoying.

Every year several thousands of boys and girls come to Zlin, most of them from villages. They are 14 years old when they arrive and they have been carefully selected on the basis of health and intelligence. They are chiefly from poor families, from peasant homes in Slovakia and Carpathia, often so primitive that they have no chimney stacks. To these boys and girls Zlin with its tall buildings, its brilliant lights, its highly-mechanized factories, seems like a fairy tale and at first they feel lost and lonely, but not for long.

From the day of their arrival agencies are set to work—*instructors, matrons, monitors, educators*—to help them make the transition from a primitive to a modern highly-mechanized society. They live, six in a room, in dormitories with every possible equipment for their health and comfort. In summer on arising at 5.45 they go outdoors for a fifteen-minute period of setting up exercises. Then they bathe, shine their shoes, make their beds, eat breakfast and at seven they are already in the factory. At twelve they have lunch in one of the Batya restaurants and supervisors see to it that they do not make a meal of pastries only, but that they eat nourishing soup, meat and vegetables. The lunch period lasts two hours and after the meal in summer they can walk around, lie down on the grass, sleep, go off somewhere to play games or to see a movie. At two in the afternoon they are back in their shops and work until five. Then they have classes, thirteen a week, in which they study not only shoemaking but geography, chemistry, languages. Girls also take courses in domestic science. At 9 in the evening they must be in bed, and at 9.15 lights are out.

This regime lasts for three years; at 17 the students complete their courses in the trade schools. During this time they have been earning wages and saving money. To save is as ingrained a trait in the Czech as to eat dumplings, and to Batya it is a basic aim

and a moral justification of human existence. He makes no secret of the fact that he wants workers to become property-minded.

Hence from the day of their arrival in Zlin these boys and girls are given little books and are taught by competent instructors to keep accounts of their incomes and their expenditures. Every crown they spend, whether it is for a movie or a piece of candy must be recorded. They must plan their expenditures so as to provide themselves daily with abundant nourishment, with entertainment and also with a balance at the end of the week for the savings account. Their first year in the factory they receive a minimum of 120 crowns a week, though usually they earn not less than 150. During the second year they average 180 and during the third 200 crowns a week. Their expenses are closely figured, 8 crowns a week for lodging, 9 for schooling, and for food in the first year 70 crowns a week, in the second 80, in the third from 85 to 90. Then they have the expense of social insurance, entertainment, clothes, shoes—and these are likewise supervised by an instructor. The savings they leave with the company which pays ten per cent interest on such deposits. [Thus from the very beginning of their life in Zlin these boys and girls learn the value and importance of money. They pay for everything they receive in cash, and at the end of every week they know their financial condition as precisely as does each shop in the factories.] On graduation from the trade school they may remain in Zlin and enter another school and prepare for further advancement as foreman, managers, salesmen, or they may leave and seek their fortunes elsewhere. Under the new scheme which is supposed to be inaugurated in the near future, the course of study in the schools is to be extended to four years, and on graduation at the age of 18, students are to get a year's leave of absence, so that they can make a survey of the opportunities outside of Zlin. They are under no obligation to Batya for the training and education they have received, because they have paid for everything in cash.

If they continue working in Zlin and get married and have a child, the management deposits a sum of 1000 crowns in its name and pays five per cent compound interest, but neither parents nor guardian may draw on the money, until the child attains its

twentieth birthday. In the event that the parents move away before that time, the money is transferred to a savings bank with the provision that it is not to be paid until the fixed term has expired. If the child grows up in Zlin it has the benefit of modern kindergartens, elementary and middle schools, language and vocational schools, and of course the factory trade schools. A person may be born in the Batya environment, grow up in it, rise to eminence or remain a worker at the belt, and be finally buried in the Zlin cemetery.

If they grow up in the Batya association they are to become Czech citizens of a brand all their own. They are to acquire healthy habits and a sense of rugged economic independence. Whether they finally settle down as clerks or floor sweepers or rise to executive positions, they are to remember that they live in a community which neither recognises nor accepts the social stratifications that obtain in other lands and in other communities. They are not to surround themselves with a wall of social exclusiveness and vaunt their superiorities before people who might be less educated or less wealthy. They are to become good workers and to seek promotion. If they fail in their search they are to make the best of their lives anyway. They are to get married, have children, be good husbands and wives, good fathers and mothers, and accommodating neighbours. They are always to be property-minded and fatten their bank accounts and on retirement find a place for themselves in the country, in a house of their own, with a plot of land, with chickens and perhaps a cow to keep them busy and stimulated.

In their private lives they are to make themselves highly individualized, live in a separate apartment or a house of their own, with a lawn, trees, shrubs, to add to their health and comfort and to enhance their privacy, physically and mentally. They are to become immune to revolutionary thoughts and emotions. Yet in their daily work they are to acclimate themselves to co-operation, for this is the age, not of the artisan, but of the machine which can be put to its greatest use only through the co-operation of all men associated with it. Thus in dormitories, in workshops, in schools, on playgrounds, they must learn the meaning and master

the technique of collaboration, but in their personal lives they must find their fulfilment in an individualistic accommodation. They are to develop not a proletarian but a middle-class consciousness.

I asked Jan Batya for an interview and he invited me to come to his office after work hours.

"Have you got a lot of time?" he said as he came out into the reception-room.

"All the time in the world," I said.

"Good, I'm going hunting and I'll take you along."

I knew he was 42 years old and after one glance at him I complimented him on looking much younger than his age.

"Well," he said, "we look young in Zlin, and why shouldn't we? We work, we eat well, we sleep well, we are always in sight of trees and grass, and we have lots of air and sun, and once in a while, if we have time, we go hunting."

He was a gaunt of a man and had it not been for his expanding waist line I should have taken him for a football player or member of a rowing crew. At least six feet in height, he was as erect as one of the pines in the nearby parks, with a face that was yielding only slightly to the encroachment of wrinkles; with an ease of manner that suggested more the man of leisure than one of the busiest executives in the world. He wore no collar and tie, his shirt was unbuttoned at the throat, and his soft light-brown hair was cut short and stood up like the stubbles of a freshly-reaped grain field. Out of his shirt at the breast stuck the heads of two pencils.

We went down to the street, got into his American car, with himself at the wheel, and drove off.

"What do you want to know?" he asked.

"Everything."

"But I am an ignorant man. I know very little."

"Tell me what kind of a capitalist you are?"

"Well, I am a capitalist who believes that capital's obligation to labour does not cease but only begins with the payment of wages."

"And what do you mean by that?"

"In America, workers may be getting high wages but what

good is it if they go through long spells of unemployment and have to spend one fourth of their income on rent? Workers should never spend more than ten per cent of their wages on rent and the average should be somewhere between five and ten per cent."

"And what else?"

"Workers should have a chance to buy fresh wholesome food at low prices. If they are unmarried and are away from home, they should have a place to take good meals with plenty of milk at low cost. If they are married, they should have comfortable homes with lots of grass and trees and sun and air, and they should have good schools, and the schools like the factories should be within walking distance from their homes, so that they won't need to spend money on transportation. They should have good doctors when they are sick and as good hospitals as money can build and science can equip. Have you seen our Zlin hospitals?"

"Not yet, but I'm going to."

"Yes, sir, capital should realize that individually a worker cannot compete with real estate dealers and shopkeepers, and it should regard it as much its duty to provide services for the worker as to pay him wages."

"Am I right in saying that in the schools here there is hardly any intellectual tradition?" Few students in the Zlin public schools went on with academic studies on reaching the age of fifteen. They preferred the Batya factory schools or the city vocational schools.

"Perhaps, I don't know enough about it."

"But you personally don't think much of education for its own sake?"

"Quite right, I do not. Neither did my late brother. We both thought that the process should be reversed—that instead of young people attending school for the sake of a so-called education and then learning to accommodate themselves to a practical world, they should make the acquaintance of this world first and acquire their education in the process. In other words they should tie up their education with doing things and with earning."

"When you say 'they'—do you mean children of workers or everybody?"

"Everybody. I have five daughters and every one of them will

go through our trade school and will be treated no better than other students. I'm not going to dictate to them what they are to do when they grow up, but they're all going to learn shoemaking from A to Z, as part of their education, and they are also to learn to appreciate the meaning of the money they earn."

"You stress earning very much in Zlin?"

"All we can, because we want our young people to grow up in a spirit of independence and enterprise. Look here, we have about 300,000 unemployed in this country and if we had enough people with a spirit of enterprise they could provide work for all the unemployed and more too. Yes, I want our people to develop not only a property sense but a business psychology so that whether they remain with the firm or leave it, they can do something to advance themselves by creating work for others."

"I take it you don't believe in revolution of any kind?"

"Except that which can be brought about by the highest development of the innate faculties of the human being—which is what we're trying to do in our firm. No more than three per cent of our executives and managers come from the outside. The rest of them are recruited from our own factories and there is no reason why every worker cannot grow up with the psychology of an *entrepreneur*."

"But many of them don't."

"That's true, and in that event he's got to grow up in a spirit of economic independence and enjoy life—be well fed, have a good home, bring up children properly, give them a good education, and build up for old age. In our works if a man comes to us at the age of fourteen, by the time he reaches forty or fifty he can retire and live on his income if he wants to . . . Of course no man should retire at such a young age if his health is good—there's nothing like work, especially if you know it's useful work. No, I don't believe in people, especially factory workers, becoming proletarians. I believe in making of them owners even if they do not go into business for themselves. Our business, as I see it, isn't my own private affair but a co-operative institution. I am the chief foreman, that's all. I punch the clock every morning like anybody else and punch it again when I go home. I am at my

desk at 7 in the morning like anybody else and stay later than others. And what do I do for recreation? I go to the movies, to the same theatre to which anybody else can go, or I go shooting and anybody can buy a gun if he wants to. I play the accordion. Anybody can do the same. You see?"

"Why don't you permit trade unions in your organizations?"

"Look here, some years ago when my brother was alive, trade union officials came to him with recommendations from the Prime Minister and told him that they wanted to organize the shops and sign a collective agreement with him. So my brother said to them: 'Very well, give me your agreement—I'll sign as good an agreement as you have signed with any industrialist in the country.' But they said: 'No, you've got to sign a special agreement.' 'Why?' my brother asked. 'Because your condition is special.' 'Well, if my condition is special, I have created it—and I have something which the trade unions haven't been able to get for any other workers in the country—so why should I allow them to have a voice in the administration of our enterprise?' Well, they left, because they had nothing to say. Some of our departments like engineering are organized but others aren't. Of course we have the councils for which the law provides."

I never hunt, so after a long walk in the woods I started for home, while Batya and his guides went off in search of deer. Dusk was settling over the earth and the dirt road which led to the main highway, edged as it was with trees and bushes, was changing colour continually. It was quiet around and the surroundings were conducive to thought. That day I had read in an English newspaper extracts of a particularly scurrilous German attack on Czechoslovakia. The brunt of the attack was the charge that the Czechs and Czechoslovakia were outposts of Bolshevism and of the Comintern and were therefore only promoters of chaos and revolution. In the light of what I had observed and learned in Zlin and of the words that I had just heard from Batya himself, the charge sounded comical. If anything, Czechoslovakia and the Czechs with their sense of moderation, their innate spirit of democracy and their extraordinary practicality, were one of the

mightiest pillars in the world and especially in Europe, of capitalism, and Batya and his system of enterprises were one of the most powerful stones in this pillar.

Whatever the errors Batya may have committed in his dealings with labour in England, in his own land he was pursuing a policy of enlightened paternalism, which had proved the despair of the trade union organizer, but which seemed to strengthen the resistance of the existing scheme of civilization against internal collapse and any and all external attacks. Zlin was middle-class as much as Tabor, and like Tabor Zlin evinced certain remarkable tolerances. In the book shop, for example, they were selling the Moscow *Izvestia* and the *Pravda*. They did it as a business proposition to accommodate customers who demanded these papers. At a teachers' convention which was held in Zlin in Batya's private theatre, I heard a teacher who had just arrived from Moscow make a speech in full vindication of Soviet policies. I asked the superintendent of schools in Zlin whether, had Batya known of this speech, he would have denied the teachers the use of the theatre. The superintendent laughed.

"Nothing like that could possibly happen here. Remember Batya is a Czech and Czechs don't do such things." Then later as I discussed with other teachers the same subject, one of them said: "Germany will be a cauldron of revolution and a slaughterhouse before there is ever any kind of an uprising in this land." Certainly Zlin was one of Europe's gigantic fortresses of the existing social order.

## Chapter VI

### MORAVIAN HOSTS

IN THE far-off year 1864 Thomas Masaryk had attended the gymnasium of Blahotnitze.\* Earlier in the same century Professor Purkyne, celebrated teacher of medicine and discoverer of finger-printing, had taught school there. Some two hundred years earlier, at the beginning of the 17th century, Jan Kamensky, a Czech pedagogue and philosopher who had left his mark on education the world over, had also lived there for two years. The house in which was his home is one of the proud monuments of the community, and bears an inscription giving the dates of the time of his arrival and the time of his departure.

At one time Blahotnitze, which insists on calling itself a town, though it is overwhelmingly peasant and agricultural, was one of the large cities of Moravia. But it had the misfortune of being a military fortress, successive invasions by Turks and Hungarians had devastated, burned it, and reduced it to the economy and the status of a village. Outside of the community the hulks of a one-time brick wall rear up from the earth, like the skeleton of a prehistoric monster.

Yet it was neither its ancient eminence nor the presence in its midst in former times of famous men in Czechoslovak history, that lured me into visiting the place. Until my arrival there I had known nothing of its past. But one afternoon, while waiting in the Spolechensky Dum in Zlin for the elevator, my eyes by mere accident fell on a poster on a nearby wall, announcing a wine festival in the Moravian village of Blahotnitze. Never before had I heard of the place. I had planned to visit a Moravian village and for days I had been studying books, circulars, newspaper clippings, in an effort to select the one most favourable for a glimpse of the civilization of the Moravian peasantry. The poster before me announced that at the festival there would be Moravian dancing

\* This is a fictitious name. ]

and singing in local costumes, the enactment of the wedding-ceremony of the bartered bride, and the sale in its ancient and enormous cellar, of wines of all vintages. I read the announcement with mounting curiosity. Obviously this was the village for me to visit. The festival had already begun but the next day—Sunday—would witness the climax of the gaiety. I asked the clerk where Blahotnitze was.

"Go to G—" he said, "by train and from there you drive by taxi or bus."

The train for G— was leaving in slightly less than an hour, so I hurried upstairs, packed, called up friends, bade them farewell, and drove to the railway station.

The first glimpse of Blahotnitze was as impressive as the first glimpse of Zlin and not because it was modern—but because it snuggled in a picturesque antiquity. On either side of the main street, so close that they seemed as if made of one piece, were the houses in a curved row, all gleaming with whitewash, all alike in style and architecture, and size, with doors, tiled roofs, fashioned in the same pattern. Fresh from the standardization of Zlin this survival of antique uniformity was enough to mock the prophets of despair who have perceived in the machine the ruin of human individuality. For here in an ancient village far away from the pressure of the machine age and from any compulsion to submit to a mathematically-shaped condition of living, merely as a matter of economy or comfort, man has built houses as highly standardized as any Batya's architects have devised. Perhaps then the human animal, really prefers standardization.

The hotel keeper in the village was a smooth-faced blond Slovak who was known as the "American." He had lived in America in his boyhood, had attended school there and still spoke fluent English. He was full of talk about America, Czechoslovakia and his village, and in spite of the rain which now simmered down in a drizzle and now swished down in torrents, he volunteered to take me around and show me how Slovak peasants—Moravian Slovaks of course, as distinguished from Slovakian Slovaks—lived.

"Here lives a rich peasant," he said, opening the gateway of a yard. Escorted by the owner of the farm—a huge blue-eyed, red-

faced Slovak in rubber boots, a cap pulled low down over his forehead, we walked into a cow stable. I perceived that here in this far away Moravian village farmers had mastered the science of dairying at least as well as the Yankee farmers for whom I had once worked. For here was a cow stable with large windows, as dry and clean as a house, with the cows—a local breed of immense size—freshly brushed and curried, each in a swinging stanchion. Water came up in a flow the moment the cow pressed her snout against a spring in a nearby container. Flocks of swallows flitted about twittering merrily, now and then alighting on the stanchions or on the backs of the cows and with no fear of man or beast.

"Why these swallows?" I asked the hotel-keeper.

"Ah, that's for good luck. American farmers don't have them?"

"I never knew any who did," I answered.

"We like swallows in our cow stables," he said solemnly. "And so do the cows."

The pigsty was likewise clean, commodious and well lighted and the pigs grunted with a lazy contentment.

"Yes," I said, "you Slovaks here certainly know how to take care of livestock."

"We do the best we can," replied the farmer with a reserved pride. He showed us his modern implements, and a large array of them—sulky plough, disk harrows, cultivators, grain drills, a mowing machine and a thrashing machine. Then he pointed to a large pit with cement walls.

"This is our silo," he said. I remembered that Russians on their new collective farms were building silos in pits and I wondered whether they had got the idea from Slovak farmers. But the ensilage in this pit was unlike any I had ever known.

"It is beat pulp," the farmer said, "mixed with alfalfa and other vegetables. Cows love it and it never spoils, no matter how hard it rains or snows, and it helps us a lot, especially in summer because we haven't land enough for pasture and we must keep cows indoors all the time."

Then he showed us through the house—a long house of one story with many rooms, all bright and light and electrified, the kitchen blazing with immaculateness. Obviously this man was a koolack, but unlike the typical Russian koolack whose only pas-

sion was gold with which to buy more land, this man cherished a wholesome respect for comfort, not only for his cows, his pigs, his rabbits, but himself. In his bedroom on a stand he had an electric light by which to read a newspaper on retiring.

"Not all farmers live as comfortably as this man," I said to the hotel keeper.

"Of course not. He is rich and most of the farmers here are poor."

"Let's go to the house of a poor farmer."

"Very well," and though the rain was still coming down we walked on until we came to the home of a friend of his—one of the poor farmers in the village.

I had no more than crossed the threshold than I was struck by a bright red painting of a rooster with outspread wings on the wall over the door to the bedroom. Then on looking around I observed other richly coloured designs over every door in the house.

"She did it herself," said the host pointing to a stocky red-cheeked woman in a short knee-high skirt and long black stockings and a bright kerchief on her head. "She" was his wife.

"I love to paint," she said, "I'll show you something." Presently she came back with sheets of writing paper and post cards, each with a brilliantly executed design which she had painted by hand, and which she was selling at a crown a piece. I bought a supply of them and then she said:

"Look at these." I did and here were hearts—cut out of thin boards and also with ornate designs, some so small that my thumb could cover them and some wide enough to be laid out on my palm.

"What are these for?" I asked.

"To give to your sweetheart."

There was laughter when I picked out a supply of wooden hearts and asked how much I was to pay for them. They thought it amusing that any man should buy so many.

Then the man of the house, a thin-faced, thin-bodied, bright-eyed Slovak with a gleaming brownish moustache, showed us around his farm. His buildings were old, in need of repairs and he had none of the modernized equipment which the other farmers had installed in his barns. But, here too was evidence of a love of

cleanliness. There were scarcely any cobwebs in his cow stables, his pigsty though small was clean and dry and so was his rabbit cage. He had no hen house and his chickens roosted on boards in the cow stable. These were scraped clean of droppings. Here too, swallows flew about with gay abandon. They also believed in good luck, these humble and good-humoured Slovaks.

"And now," I said when we were in the street again, "we had better go and take a look at your wine cellar."

"You ain't never seen nothing like it," answered the hotel keeper in English. We retraced our steps to the market place, walked into a yard which had a huge shed for tables and benches and at the farther end was an immense newly built dance pavilion.

"Where is the cellar?" I said.

"You've got to sample some wines before you go down there."

"Which kind?" asked the little short jacketed Slovak who was at a stand with numerous shelves that were blazing with bottles of wine.

"Any kind," I said. So we drank three kinds. "And now," said my guide, "we go down the cellar and have some more wine."

Over three hundred years old, with heavy arched walls strung with electric lights, the cellar was, in contrast to the street, bright and cheerful. It was immense, and on either side the walls were lined with enormous casks, sodden with age and exhaling a fragrance of wood, earth, and wine. There weren't many people around—a few men and women sitting at long tables, eating and drinking; at another table, with a bottle before them, a young couple in richly coloured costumes talked and laughed with animation.

As we sauntered back from a survey of the cellar we were hailed at the doorway by a group of men, all clean shaven with freshly polished knee-high boots, in dark holiday clothes, with short jackets and embroidered white shirts. One of them was the father of the rich peasant we had visited, and on learning that I was impressed with his son's progressive mindedness as a farmer, he bowed and smiled with pleasure. But instantly the smile vanished and he grew solemn and asked what I thought of the German military manœuvres just starting.

Had not they mentioned the subject I shouldn't have thought of it, because the calm of the village, of the whole country and of the Czech press in the face of an event that was loaded with dire uncertainty and even with more dire explosiveness, had been too reassuring.

"Well," said one man, "I fought in the last war, and I can still shoot as well as any German. If Hitler comes, he can have my life, but he'll pay for it dearly."

"He can have mine, too," said another man, "But it will cost him something."

No anxiety and no panic in the words or faces of these sturdy peasants, only sober resolve and dignified self-confidence, and not a trace of venom or vituperation in their reference to Hitler, Germany or their country's danger. I recalled Masaryk's words—"exasperation is no programme"—and in them, so I felt, the veteran philosopher and humanitarian had expressed not only an idea and a slogan but a deep-rooted trait in his people.

Only the day before, while still in Zlin, I was lunching with a Czech and his wife, and in the course of the luncheon we had read in a British newspaper extracts of a particularly loathsome attack on Czechs in the German press. But my companions had only laughed. "They are welcome to the pleasure they get out of their rage and their gutter vocabulary," said the man. That was all he said and his wife nodded in agreement.

Here, these men, though solemn, were inordinately calm even now, in the face of the gathering storm. Only their curiosity was unquenched and they continued with more questions.

"What d'you think of Chamberlain?" asked one man.

"What do you think of him?" I turned to all of them. Shrugs and puzzled looks were their reply. Not one of them ventured a word of comment. Then another question:

"Who is Lord Runciman?"

I said I knew little about him.

"Benes should never have let him come," said one man, irritably.

"He is no friend of our people," chimed in another.

"Perhaps he means well," remarked still another. And again silence. Not a frown or gesture of displeasure, only silence, and

the so-called Czech contemplation, which these Moravian Slovaks seem to have acquired and which often puzzles and dismays the outsider, but which those who understand the people never can mistake for irresolution or timidity.

"Come later towards evening," said one man, "there'll be lots of people here—if the rain stops. And now have a drink."

"Yes, have a drink," said another man, "which wine will you have? My number is—"

"And mine is—"

"But I cannot drink everybody's wine," I protested.

"Nonsense, of course you can—wine like ours."

Towards evening I came again, alone this time. The grounds teemed with life. Streams of people circulated about, coming in and out of the cellar, promenading in the courtyard or making merry at the tables under the shed. The rain during the day and the mud in the streets had discouraged most of them from wearing the costumes advertised on the poster in Zlin. But some of them bravely defied rain and mud. On first sight it was hard to tell who wore the gaudiest attire—the men or the women. Here among these Moravian Slovaks was all the love of adornment with which the word Slav had been associated and to which the sombre dress of the Czechs was so startling an exception. But then the Czechs had merely transferred their love of colour from themselves to the world about them. Hence the abandon with which they cultivated flowers. Here in Blahotnitz as I walked about the streets I had observed few flowers. Now and then I saw in a window the lonely head of a nasturtium. Save for the poppies which were raised not for their ornamental appeal but for the seed with which to flavour desserts, the gardens were as bare of riotousness as is the dress of the average Czech. But at this wine feast every costume was a walking flower garden, flashing and whirling with as rich a display as any gardener ever stirred out of the earth.

I leaned against a pillar and observed the scene about me. Three young men were singing a lively ditty at the top of their voices, the very top. Near the dance pavilion a little man, as ornate as a peacock, gave a jump and a whirl and let out a swift and joyous scream. The floor of the pavilion was shiny with tracks of mud and children.

Some of the little girls in as lavishly hued costumes as their sisters or their mothers, pranced about shouting with glee. It was amazing how loud-voiced those people were, not only the children, and not so much in speech as in the singing and the shouting.

The orchestra struck up a tune and the players were bent on only one aim—to force from their instruments all the sound they could. They were like children who love to inflate rubber balloons to the point of bursting. With all their energies—their faces red, their eyes popping out of their sockets, their jaws trembling—they strove, so it seemed to me, to blow their instruments and themselves to pieces. Czech musicians are always first and foremost musicians. The composition before them—whether a folk tune or a concerto—is an object which they would exalt and ennable with all the delicacy of their minds and all the fervour of their souls. That is why in the cafés of Prague, however humble and poor the people who visit them, the music is always appealing. I know of no cafés in Europe where the orchestras have such fine musicians as those in Prague or even in the smaller cities of Czechoslovakia. But these Moravian Slovaks were at the moment more stirred by an urge for clamour than by any love of melody. The longer the orchestra played the more tempestuous was its ebullience and the more violent was the dancing. More and more couples rushed to the pavilion and more and more young men, as they hopped and whirled and leaped, burst into merry yells and screams. There was wildness in the souls of these people, which the Czechs had long ago tamed and transmuted into reflective behaviour.

"The Czech always thinks," a Slovak professor had said to me, "and the Slovak always feels." Never had these words seemed more true than now. I could not imagine Czechs abandoning themselves with such a profligacy of passion to the sheer joy of noise-making, as did these Moravian Slovaks.

The dance came to an end and the pavilion instantly emptied. Of a sudden I heard a voice behind me, "The Senator wants to speak to you."

"The Senator?" I repeated, surveying the bronzed-faced, blue-eyed man before me.

"Yes, our Senator," and he pointed to a huge man in a clerical garb and in a black felt hat at a table under the shed. Taking me

by the arm he led me to the Senator's table. We shook hands and the Senator slid off a space on the bench and invited me to sit down beside him. He placed a glass before me, filled it with wine and, lifting his own glass, he said :

"Drink!" We clinked glasses and drank. His bottle was now empty and he ordered another. We talked of America, Europe, the British Prime Minister, Lord Runciman, and when our glasses were empty he refilled them and said : "Drink!"

"But I just drank."

"Drink another."

"But—"

"It's such mild wine."

"But—"

"I know Americans would rather drink whisky—but here we like wine."

"But—"

"*Na Zdar*," and of course I drank.

"When you come to Bratislava," he said, "you must be sure to call me on the telephone and come out to see me. I live only a short distance away."

"And we'll drink more wine?"

"Absolutely."

Later when the dancing started again I stationed myself in my former place and once more watched the dancers. No sooner had the dance ended than I heard a man's voice :

"Welcome to our town." I turned and saw before me a tall gaunt man with a sharp-featured face and with a greyish stubble about his cheeks and chin. "I understand," he said, "you're an American writer, and I thought you might be interested in coming with me to my home and see how an ordinary man here lives." I stared at the man. Was I in Czechoslovakia or in Russia? I couldn't imagine a Czech addressing me so familiarly without my opening the conversation, and with so little a sense of privacy, that without any hint from me he had invited me to come to his house. Well then, these Moravian Slovaks, though regarded by Slovakian Slovaks as no Slovaks but as a breed of humanity all their own more akin to the Czechs with whom they had for centuries been associa-

ting than to themselves out of whom they had come, were real Slavs with the ebullience and sociability of Russians, Poles, Yugoslavs and all other Slavs I had ever known.

We were joined by two other men, one short, portly, red-faced, the other slender, bony, with kindly blue eyes and an affable smile. One was a merchant and the portly man was a road commissioner.

"These are my friends," said the man with the grey stubble, "and now let's all go up to my house."

"Let's visit mine first," said the merchant, and we started off. The merchant lived in a large and commodious apartment with enormous windows, a high ceiling and furnished lavishly with hand-made woodwork, pictures, and luxurious rugs. There was nothing rustic and nothing especially extravagant about the place or its furnishings. Then the man with the stubble on his face—he was a cement dealer—said :

"Now let's all go up to my place and have a *slivovitz* (plum brandy)."

"But I've already had all the drinks I can stand," I protested.

"You only drank wine, *slivovitz* will be more to your liking," he answered with reassurance. But when we came to his house he first led me through his rooms. Again I reflected on the contrast between the Czech with his British-like reserve and ingrained sense of privacy and these Slovaks who on merely seeing a stranger in their midst invited him to drink wine and to visit their homes. This man, the cement dealer, was now piloting me through his house and with unabashed eagerness, explaining each room, its purpose, its furnishings, its inhabitant. On showing me into the pantry, he said :

"This is where we keep our food." He opened drawer after drawer and continued with a barrage of explanations. "This is wheat . . . this is wheat flour . . . this is dried fruit . . . this is rice . . . and this," pointing to a flank of shiny raw bacon hung on a string from the ceiling, "is smoked bacon—we eat it raw—and it is excellent." There was not a drawer or receptacle in the pantry that he didn't point out and call out the name of the food it held, even of the onions, the potatoes, the beans. The very habit of articulateness spurred him into redundant explanations precisely as a Russian peasant might be. The inspection of the house over,

we went into the living-room and hardly had we sat down when the portly man asked :

"D'you think Hitler will turn his military manœuvres into war against us?"

"Yes, what d'you think of the German manœuvres?" several voices broke in.

"Only Hitler knows," I answered.

"Look here," said the portly man, "I was in the last war and I was badly wounded." Forthwith he took off his coat, his vest, his shirt and stood there stripped to the waist.

"See," and he pointed to his shoulders and his chest, "these are wounds which I received in the war. I was laid up for months. Now I am well again. But I know what war is, and I hate it, but the moment German soldiers step on our territory, I go."

"We all go," interjected someone else.

Quickly slipping into his clothes again, the portly man said : "It's all very simple with us. We want to be friends with the Germans. We don't want war. But if they want to take our independence away from us we'll fight."

"Yes, fight."

"And die."

"Fight and die."

"It's better not to live than to have no independence. We know it, we were without it for three hundred years."

"And how well we know it!"

Words poured out of them incessantly, in brief and telling sentences, bristling with resolve but with not a glint of hate. Like the Czechs I had known, these Slovaks in their attitude towards Germany displayed none of the wild emotions with which the German Nazis erupted in all their comments and all their attacks on their most immediate and most formidable neighbours. Whatever else these Czechs and Slovaks might lack, their nerves were made of steel, and therein, at the time, so we foreign journalists believed, lay their greatest virtue and their greatest strength, and also a real hope of a peaceful settlement of the conflict with the Germans.

"And now we must have a *slivovitz*," said my host.

"You see," he said, pouring the *slivovitz*, "in this country we

raise not only grapes but plums, and out of our grapes we make wine but out of our plums we make *slivovitz*. Here now," and he passed the glasses to his guests. We clinked them and while I merely swallowed a sip of mine, the others emptied theirs at one gulp in the manner of Russians drinking vodka.

"Oh, no," said the portly man turning to me, "you mustn't sip, you must drink it all in one swallow."

"It's so strong!"

"You won't feel it so much if you drank it all down." In various parts of the world I had met numbers of skilled and unskilled drinkers, but never had I known any drinker who held that the whole of a strong drink would be less disturbing to an inexperienced drinker than a part of one. However, I raised my glass and drained it to the bottom.

"There now, that's the way to drink it," said the portly man. The wine was already running through me like fire. "Now I'll give you another drink—*mletnitse*—It is made out of the pressed grape," explained my inexorable host. "You see after we make our wine we take what's left of the grape and boil and burn it and we get *mletnitse*. I'll let you taste it." He brought out another decanter the contents of which sparkled in the light as colourlessly as vodka. He filled a glass and offered it to me.

"Is it very strong?" I asked.

"Not very, about 55 or 60 per cent." I gasped and shook my head.

"I am not used to strong drinks," I protested.

"Eat a piece of raw bacon with plenty of salt and it'll make a filter for your drinks," advised the portly man.

"I don't like raw bacon," I said, and remembered vividly the distress that I had once suffered in a Russian village after making a meal with a peasant family of black bread, potatoes and raw bacon.

"Well, drink it," insisted the host drawing close and flashing on me his bright eyes as though bent on mesmerizing me.

Then as if out of nowhere there appeared on the table a plate of cold goose. I turned to see who it was that had placed it before me and there a little to one side like an apparition that had

crawled out of the earth, stood a girl, short, plumpish with bobbed hair, shiny blue eyes and a friendly smiling face.

"My daughter, Marenka," said my host. The girl bowed, smiled and shook hands.

"You're a beautiful girl," I said forgetting *slivovitz*, *mlechnitse* and even the goose.

"Very beautiful," said the portly man, "and very brilliant, just graduated from the gymnasium."

"And going to the university," said the father with pride.

"And what are you going to study?" I asked.

"I'm going to study law and enter the diplomatic service."

"I have two other children, who have graduated from the university, a son who's a physician and a daughter who's a social worker," added the father again with pride.

"You're a family of scholars," I said.

"Very brilliant children," added the portly man and as I looked admiringly at Marenka, he said, "Are you married?"

"No," I said.

"And Marenka isn't either," chimed in the father.

"Well then—" said the portly man and stopped.

"Let's have another *slivovitz*," broke in the father and filled our glasses. We drank the *slivovitz* and I ate goose and bread and cucumber and we talked away, mostly of the bad weather and the damage it had done to the wine feast, preventing people from the surrounding villages from coming in their festive garb and showing me how truly beautiful was the dress of the women in Moravia. Of a sudden the father looked into the next room and exclaimed:

"Here now . . . look!" He had no more than finished his words when Marenka glided into the living-room in her brilliant peasant dress. She wasn't the same person at all—and as she paraded up and down, coquettishly swinging her arms and her now amplified hips, she seemed more like a creature designed to taunt the nature of man than just a village girl who had graduated from the gymnasium and was going to study law and to seek a position in the diplomatic service.

"Don't forget," said the portly man, "Marenka is still single."

"And I want to remain single," she broke in, "for a long, long time. First I want to study law and go into the diplomatic service."

"A modern woman," I remarked.

"It's no use getting married too soon," she said, looking more beautiful than ever.

We went back to the festival. The shed was still crowded with people and so was the cellar, chiefly with young people. They drank, sang, danced, shouted. Boys and girls embraced each other gaily. A Gipsy was playing a cymbal and a crowd gathered to listen. When the playing ended, one exuberant fellow let out a wild scream and two others followed suit, a fourth embraced a girl and they whirled swiftly around the floor singing. Marenka was there with a group of her friends, evidently the young intelligentsia of the village, and they were laughing gaily over their wine. She introduced me to her young man who was a school teacher in a distant village. As we walked out of the cellar towards the dance pavilion he drew his arm around her and said:

"Don't we suit each other well?"

"Magnificently," I said. We both laughed and Marenka flushed. We entered the dance pavilion.

The music was no music but an explosion of rhythmic noise. The orchestra seemed bent on making earth and sky quake with rhythm.

To me, trying to understand this little land of Czechoslovakia, this celebration and the unrestrained outpouring of emotion were further testimony not only to the innate joy but to the innate democracy of these people. This was a community event. Members of parliament, school teachers, engineers, physicians, lawyers, government officials, carpenters, cobblers, peasants, Gipsies, an author or two, all mingled on terms of unreserved equality. Every one was himself, and none paid homage to any one else. None held himself aloof or away or beyond the spirit of the occasion. No one was superior or inferior. Daily travail and external dangers were sunk in a common fealty and a common joy. And more than that, though faces were flushed and eyes glowed with the fire of wine and passion, there were no altercations, no fights, no harsh words at all, nothing but jollity and comradeship.

The next morning the sun rose high and warm and save for the

mud on the side-streets nothing had remained of the inclemency of the day before. The tiled roofs sparkled in the sun and the whitewashed cottages gleamed with a fresh brilliance. Of the tumult of yesterday nothing had remained, not even the sign of a hangover anywhere. The newly arrived visitor never would have known that only the night before the village had rocked with clamour and gaiety. Now it had settled down to peace and toil, and as I wandered about everywhere men and women were going back to their implements hastening to take advantage of the hot sun and finish harvesting their grain.

The wife of a schoolmaster whom I had met at the wine feast invited me to go with her to a wedding in a neighbouring village. The son of a well-to-do peasant was marrying the daughter of an even more well-to-do peasant. We arrived in time for the wedding dinner. Not many people had come—they were too busy in the fields. But in the evening there would be another feast in the inn and a big crowd would come to witness the ceremony of “bartering the bride.” Only immediate friends and relatives of the bride and groom were in attendance, and there were enough of them to crowd the seats of the two long tables in the home of the groom. They were nearly all young people, some dressed in conventional clothes and some in ornately embroidered costumes.

Here, then, were ancient history and the machine age side by side with no sign of a clash or disharmony between the two but the poetry and nobility all on the side of ancient history.

No sooner had the groom’s mother—who was a friend of the schoolmaster’s wife—noticed us than she sped us to seats at one of the tables. What would we drink—beer, wine or, of all things, soda water? We must drink something—absolutely—and wine would be best, local wine of the finest vintage. And so wine it was! And of course we must eat, and we had come at the right moment, for the dinner was just beginning. First came chicken soup, with more chicken than soup, and with macaroni and dumplings the plate was filled to the brim. I could only eat a part of it, that’s what I thought, but they all insisted that I finish the plate. So I compelled myself to live up to the code of the country. Yet no sooner had I eaten the soup than a plate of roast veal had slid before me.

“Oh, yes, you must eat it. You’re at a wedding, at a Slovak

wedding, you cannot disgrace yourself," insisted my neighbours. So I did away with one piece of roast veal.

"You must eat up the other piece, too," admonished the schoolmaster's wife, and the groom's mother leaned over and with an expression of real concern asked:

"Don't you like our Slovak roast veal? Of course we are only peasants—and we cook very simply." I couldn't possibly leave the question unanswered and so I proceeded to do justice to the other piece of the meat on my plate. Then came salad, and what a salad! Potatoes, tomatoes, cucumbers, beans, all held together by a thick dressing and the top laid out with slabs of butter.

"Please!" I pleaded, but uselessly. Of course I ate the salad. After all, I was at a Slovak wedding!

"A beer, please," said the groom's mother, and I had to drink the beer. Then came fried chicken and ice cream and cake with whipped cream and coffee! Somehow I managed to cheat on the ice cream and the cake and when coffee was served the orchestra, which had been in an adjoining room practising, now burst into play—Slovak play—lifting the very house with the instruments! One after another the diners leaped up and started waltzing the whirling waltz which no Slav, not even Poles and Russians, can dance with as impassioned a buoyancy as can Slovaks. I too danced, with the schoolmaster's wife, and after a few rounds—she doing the leading, my head reeled and sweat poured down my forehead. But when it was over—the food inside of me no longer felt like an unholy burden. With such strenuous dancing between courses, a Slovak wedding feast would be no ordeal. Only they should have started the dancing sooner.

As we were leaving the party, the groom's mother came over with stuffed bags and gave one to each of us.

"What's that for?" I asked.

"To take home," said the schoolmaster's wife. I looked inside my bag—it was packed with cakes and cookies and other pastries.

"But I've eaten so much already?" I protested.

"You can eat it later," said the schoolmaster's wife.

"Does every wedding guest get a bagful of cakes on leaving?" I asked.

"That's the custom here," she answered.

"Don't they do it in America?" inquired the young girl.

"Perhaps Slovaks do."

"Strange, isn't it?"

"As strange to you that American's don't, as to Americans that you do."

"It saves a lot of expense anyway," said the schoolmaster's wife.

"Yes, and a lot of work," interjected the groom's mother. "It took me a whole week working day and night to bake these cakes."

"A whole week!" Here was hospitality with a vengeance.

"Yes, but it's a great joy to a mother to see her child married and to give every guest a remembrance of the wedding."

When I left I said, "I'll certainly remember this Slovak wedding," and never in my life had I meant my words more earnestly.

Blahotnitze has a population of over 5000 people. It is an old village and has always been Slovak, Moravian Slovak. In the office of the mayor on a wall over his desk hung a roster of the names of mayors since 1594, with not one German, Hungarian or any other foreign name. They were all Slovak names. Only a short time earlier the village had celebrated the 300th anniversary of the local Gymnasium, which testified to an old love for education. Throughout the 300 years of its subjection to the Hapsburgs, the village resisted with its very life-blood all efforts at denationalization and disintegration. It would be Slovak in spite of taunts and blandishments and repressions.

That was why with the collapse of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire it was ready for the revolution which had swept Czechoslovakia into independence. But what happened since the revolution—what creative forces had it unleashed and how and wherein had it been transforming the life of the individual and the destiny of the community? After all, from this revolution a democratic revolution which in the process of its unfolding had eschewed the physical destruction of its enemies or their possessions, had in fact kept its sword sheathed and its gun in a pouch, the world had the right to expect not merely promise, but fulfilment. What then was this fulfilment?

Outwardly the lay of the village and the style of its architecture, the whitewashed cottages and the v-shaped tiled roofs, had under-

gone no change. The songs, the customs, the costumes, the festivals, the sociability, had likewise remained as of old or largely so. There were trees on the main street in the old days but they were few and uncared for. Now the main street was lined on both sides with flourishing lindens, cherry and other fruit trees, and a man with an understanding of the way of nature with trees was always on hand to check disease and facilitate growth. There were 150 new and imposing public buildings in the village. Yet these and the new trees and the new pavement on the main street gave only a hint, and not too impressively, of the inner transformation that it had known in the years of the Republic.

First and foremost there was the land reform. Peasants who had had no land in the old days received allotments and now there were not many families in the community without their own land. Former hired men became independent householders. True their allotments were small. There wasn't land enough to go round. But they now enjoyed a condition of independence they never had known before.

But the Republic didn't stop with the mere distribution of the land. Because of their superior education and wealth landlords could pursue advanced methods of agriculture, especially in Moravia. But few of the peasants could. They had neither the knowledge nor the means to do so. They had to be instructed and helped. Hence the system of agricultural agents, the special schools and the courses and the financial aid that were made available to the peasantry.

Now co-operatives bought up eggs, put them in modern cold-storage plants and regulated sales so as to avoid the disastrous slumps in prices which had formerly obtained. More and more the co-operatives were opening up retail shops. The private shopkeepers in the village looked upon the co-operatives with misgivings. Some of them saw in them a weapon of death to their business but others held that their overhead expenses would always be too high to compete with private management. The co-operatives of course have far-reaching plans. They hope to take over not only the sale of agricultural products but the manufacture of goods in which they are used—sugar factories, for example, of which they already

had a large number—and also the manufacture of implements, fertilizers and many other products for the farmer.

Yet the peasantry in Blahotnitze, with only a few notable exceptions, while not in distress, weren't affluent. Their homes were small, clean and crowded. Astounding was the number of peasants who used cows for draft purpose. They would use a horse if they could afford it, but it costs twice as much to feed a horse as it does to feed a cow. In case of an accident—if the horse broke a leg and had to be shot—the meat and the hide would fetch about 500 or at most 700 crowns. But if a cow met with disaster and had to be killed, the meat and the hide would yield from 2000 to 2500 crowns. Then when she reached old age and could work no longer her carcass could still be of value to the butcher. Of course a cow wasn't as strong as a horse and could neither be prodded nor beaten into the speed of a horse. She stepped along with exasperating slowness. But she gave milk, about half of what she might have done had she been out in a pasture or remained all the time in a stanchion and devoted herself to eating and drinking. But the milk formed an indispensable item in the daily food of the family, especially as few farmers could afford meat every day. Most of them ate meat only on Sundays and on feast days. Milk and milk products, eggs, cereals, cucumbers, tomatoes, potatoes, cabbage and dumplings made up their diet. Then their vineyards furnished wine which in winter they mixed with water and boiled and ate with bread.

They were nourished well enough, yet they shrank from having large families. They would take no chance on lowering their standard of living. The new education which had come to them since the establishment of the Republic had made them more worldly-minded in this respect. In Ruthenia and in Slovakia the peasantry might still cultivate large families but not in Blahotnitze; people limited offspring to an average of three per family.

Blahotnitze had always believed in education. "What you've got in your head is more precious than what you've got in your bank," the cement dealer had been telling Marenka and his other children. The hunger for education was continually outstripping the facilities of the village to satisfy it. Fresh sections had been added to all schools and still there was scarcely room for all the

young people who wished to attend the gymnasium. Girls had taken to education with a special passion. Formerly few of them thought of going to the gymnasium, now they made up two-fifths of the students there. Many of them went beyond the gymnasium to the university or a training school. Also more and more people were displaying a healthy concern about public affairs. That was why so many of them were reading newspapers. Labourers who never before had been concerned with the world outside of their own little spheres of existence, were now among the most avid readers of newspapers and books. The library, which was new—all communities under the Republic were supposed to have libraries free to the population—enjoyed an extensive patronage.

Even the Gipsies who lived on the outskirts of the village had felt the stir of the creative forces of the Republic. There were about 170 of them, and formerly they were the butt of the community. They shunned schools and productive labour and gave themselves to vagabondage and to a life of parasitism. Now they were settling down. They were becoming carpenters, blacksmiths, day labourers. Their children were going to school and learning manners and new ways of living. Their young men with their strong physiques made good soldiers and their girls learned Slovak dances and songs and attended festivals and mingled more and more with the other young people of the community. In a nearby village there was a Gipsy lawyer, a graduate of the university, popular not only for his legal abilities but for his integrity of character. A new day therefore had come for the whole population of the village.

The school teacher with the limping leg who was also the vice-mayor of the village, had placed at my disposal the records of the community and when I was finished with them he showed me around the town hall with its numerous rooms and repositories of public records of many centuries. After we had surveyed the top floor I thought we were finished and I started for the stairway.

"One more room I want to show you—quite important," he said gravely. I went back and followed him to a door which he unlocked. I walked in and saw gas masks, rubber coats, rubber boots, and tiers of freshly made stretchers. For some time we stood there in silent contemplation of the mass of war paraphernalia, then he spoke again with a ring of sad bitterness.

"It cost us a lot of money and we're not rich here. We could use the money for other purposes—paving our streets, building new additions to our schools—but . . ." he paused an instant, sighed and muttered:

"There's civilization for you!"

Before my departure I made the rounds of the village again, sauntering at leisure from street to street and observing everyday life. A group of children were feeding cabbage leaves to a black sheep with a white tail. The children stroked the sheep and laughed whenever it failed to find the hand that held the coveted leaf. Obviously they loved animals and were kind to them and there is nothing more cheering and more moving in a village than companionship between children and animals. A tall man was leading a calf by a halter. Now and then the calf fixed its feet in the earth and stubbornly refused to move. Instead of beating it into obedience the man tugged it by its head and when that did no good he stepped up to its rear and pushed and it gave a wild leap forward and balked no more. Bent under a freshly cut load of alfalfa, a woman in a black dress, was making her way into a courtyard in which all the buildings were of thatch in places covered with moss and in places blown into holes by the wind. In front of a house a little girl humming a tune was crouching on the doorstep and watching a flock of chickens scratching and squawking in a pile of empty poppy heads. A kerchiefed woman was riding a bicycle and holding an immense blue crock in one hand. An old man was sitting at a doorstep and reflectively puffing at a huge fifeka-pipe. Loudly a group of children were playing a game of hide-and-seek near a pond. The ducks in the pond, were splashing themselves in the sun-flooded waters and cackled with cheer. A little girl with a sack on her shoulders sat down at the foot of a cross on the top of which was an image of the Virgin and the Son, over it a wooden hood to protect it from wind and rain . . . At every step were scenes of humility, of industriousness, of contentment, of a sturdy respect for nature and life.

On my way back to the hotel I stopped to bid Marenka good-bye.

She fetched a bottle of wine and two tumblers and said:

"And now we must have a drink of wine." She filled the tumblers, offered one to me, took one in her hand, lifted it and said:

"*Na Zdar.*"

"*Na Zdar,*" I answered and took a sip. "I suppose you expect me to drink up every bit of this wine?"

"If you are an appreciative guest you will."

"And not only in the glass but in the bottle?" She laughed loud. Then I told her of my experience at the wedding dinner.

"Yes, of course," she remarked seriously, "you must never leave any food on the plate when you are at a wedding dinner. Hunger and appetite have nothing to do with good manners."

"It's just as well I'm leaving before I get an invitation to another wedding dinner." Again she laughed.

"Would you like to see my library?" she asked.

"Yes, please."

She rose from her chair, opened a bookcase and pointed to shelves which were neatly set out with books.

"I've read them all—and which do you think is my favourite book?"

"Tolstoy's *War and Peace?*" I ventured a guess.

She shook her head and drew from the upper shelf two finely-bound volumes and showed them to me. They were a Czech edition of Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga*.

"Strange that this novel should be your favourite," I said.

"Not at all—our family is like the Forsyte family. Many Czech and Moravian families are like that, yes they are," she added with emphasis. "It's a wonderful book and I never tire of re-reading it, and neither does my sister."

Kipling and Romain Rolland and Sinclair Lewis, Upton Sinclair, Tolstoy, Pushkin, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, were among her other favourite authors.

"Now I want to ask you something," she said. "I didn't want to discuss politics with you at the wine feast, but I wish you'd tell me what you make of Runciman and his mission to our country?"

"I wish I knew what to tell you," I answered. I preferred not

to repeat to this eager and troubled girl the bitter and pessimistic comments of American and British journalists on this mission.

"I don't see why Benes trusts the British so much," she declared. "I wouldn't trust them."

"And why not?"

"Well, I can't help thinking that if the British were our real friends they wouldn't send Runciman here and make the Germans feel we aren't capable of handling our own problems. It weakens us in the eyes of the Henleinists and the others who want to destroy us."

She was grave now and her eyes so bright with merriment the night of the wine feast were shadowed with anxiety.

"Perhaps," I said and trying to comfort her, "it'll work out well."

She looked at me searchingly.

"We're a small nation and Germany is so large," she said, "but our people aren't afraid. They'll fight for their independence."

Nineteen years old, graduate of the gymnasium, devotee of Galsworthy, Romain Rolland, Tolstoy, Sinclair Lewis—and as resolute as any of the men at the wine cellar who calmly assured me that Hitler could have their lives but he would have to pay for them dearly!

Little did she and I realize on that bright summer day that by the time she was ready to go to Prague and matriculate in the university, her country would be carved to pieces.

## Chapter VII

### FUNERAL OF A PRIEST

ONE day a school teacher invited me to his home for lunch. He was a Moravian Slovak and his wife was a Slovakian Slovak, and as I was on my way to Slovakia I plied her with questions about the country and the people. Hardly had we finished eating when a neighbour came in and asked if we had heard of Father Hlinka's death.

"Thank God," exclaimed the schoolmaster's wife.

I looked at her in surprise! A Slovakian Slovak, a Roman Catholic, speaking with relief of the death of the most dramatic figure in Slovakia, the leader of the People's Party. Startled by his wife's words, the schoolmaster said :

"You needn't express your sentiments so publicly."

"And why not?" she countered a little heatedly. "Hlinka wanted to ruin our people—co-operating with Henlein—the traitor! All he wanted was a Fascist government in Slovakia. Imagine it, a priest flirting with Fascism, the worst enemy of our Church. I am a better Roman Catholic than Hlinka ever thought of being."

There was no mistaking the conviction of this Slovak woman. To her Hlinka was one of the arch enemies of his own people and of the Republic.

But her husband, the Moravian Slovak, also a Roman Catholic, said :

"Hlinka was a good man. He had made the liberation of the Slovak people the aim of his whole life. It was too bad he was unfitted by nature for a political career. He had no historical perspective." Then turning to me he said : "I guess you're too late for your interview with him."

True enough. I had looked forward eagerly to this interview with Father Hlinka. I had read an essay by him which I liked for its spirit of reverence, its troubled concern over the waywardness of man and over the misfortunes of his people. I had heard Slovaks

speak of him with love and, like the schoolmaster's wife, with hate. In London I had read of an interview with him in which he said that unless Slovakia was appeased in her political aspiration for complete autonomy she would find her own way of realizing it. This sounded like a threat of secession.

Son of a peasant from a village near Rozemberok, his last home, Hlinka had all his life fought against Hungary for the liberation of his people. When he was a young man Hungarian soldiers had shot a number of people in his church. He had served a sentence in jail under the old Hapsburg empire. He had roused the sympathy of Professor Seton Watson who had given thirty years of his life to fighting for the cause of the Slovaks. Hlinka's name had been a symbol of martyrdom and of the liberation of suppressed peoples. In pre-war days Czechs and Slovaks in Bohemia had helped and courted and defended him. Yet now even in the midst of the ever-rising threat of Nazi Germany to the Republic of which Slovakia was an organic and important part, Hlinka had been fiercely critical of the Czechs Derer and of those Slovaks like Hodza, the Prime Minister, and the Minister of Justice and others in high positions in the Republic, who balked at the immediate gratification of his demands. Around him were gathering all the recalcitrant sections of Slovakia, honest patriots who feared that the highly competent Czechs would in time dissolve the differences in the cultures of the two peoples and that the Slovaks would cease to be a separate nation, as well as unscrupulous politicians with a lust for power and for gain, who had a pronounced hatred for the democracy and the humanitarianism of the Czechs, and who perceived in Hlinka a means of achieving their goal.

Not of course that Hlinka and his People's Party, with all the power and prestige and resources at their command, enjoyed the undisputed support of all Slovaks. Out of the 61 deputies to the Prague Parliament from Slovakia 9 represented the Hungarian minority, 30 the coalition parties which made up the Czechoslovak Government and only 22 the Hlinka's People's Party. Masaryk, the father of the Republic, was a Slovak. Steffanik, the professor of astronomy, who during the world war became a legionnaire and was raised to the rank of general in the French army and was with Masaryk and Benes the guiding genius of the revolution which

established the Republic, was a Slovak. Hodza, the Prime Minister of the moment, was a Slovak, and in years past Slovaks like Schrobar and Kallay and many others had played eminent rôles in the development of the Republic. Besides, the Lutherans, who constituted about one-fifth of the Slovak population, were outspokenly against Hlinka and his political obscurantism. Monseigneur Okanik and Monseigneur Jiriga, eminent Roman Catholic clergymen, had broken with him and were fighting his political influence. Both men had given their lives as assiduously as had Hlinka to the liberation of Slovakia from Hungarian rule. Immense but disorganized was the opposition to the priest at Rozemberok. Yet Hlinka was a power to reckon with. He had become a storm centre of controversy. An impressive orator, he often made speeches to huge crowds. All efforts of Slovaks in high positions in Prague and of Czechs to win him to a programme of moderation had failed.

Now he was dead. Slovaks from all over in thousands would come to his burial. Czechs too, if only out of politeness, would honour him. His funeral would be an event of more than national importance. Therefore I would go there. It seemed odd and tragic that instead of an interview with Hlinka I should find myself going to his funeral.

I regretted immensely that I was too late to talk to him. I felt that only he could enlighten me as to the real source of the conflict between himself and Prague. I had read the *Slovak*, the leading newspaper of the Hlinka Party, and I was unimpressed by its arguments, still less by its manner and spirit. Obscurantism and intolerance spurted out of its stories and its editorials. It had seemed to me that the group which had gathered round the *Slovak* had in all their laments and denunciations forgotten the gruesome history of their people, who for about a thousand years had been tyrannized and impoverished by the Hungarians.

They had forgotten no less tragically the triumphs of Slovakia in every department of human experience in the twenty years of the Republic. I had compared the records of Slovakia as it had been under the Hungarians and as it had become under the Republic and the contrast was unbelievable. The land reform had brought

an end to the domination of the landlords. The 686,000 hectares which had been the property of 981 landlords, had been divided among 198,786 peasants. Every second family in Slovakia was the beneficiary of the land reform.

In education the achievements were noble. In the old days Slovakia had only 140 elementary schools in the Slovak language. More than 90 per cent. of the other schools had been Magyarized. Now Slovakia had 3277 elementary schools, all in the native tongue with an attendance of 412,559 pupils. The Hungarians had suppressed all efforts at the establishment of Slovak upper elementary and middle schools. Now there were 197 of the first with an attendance of 63,988 and 49 of the second with an attendance of 26,133 for boys and girls. At the start of the Republic there was in the whole of Slovakia not one commercial school, not one industrial school, not one technical school, not one school for special women's professions and of course no university. Now the Slovaks had 14 teachers' training schools, 20 commercial schools, 32 technical and industrial schools and a flourishing university in Bratislava. In 1910 only 57.3 per cent. of the Slovak population was literate, but in 1930 the percentage had risen to 93 and since then still higher.

Illiteracy is almost gone in Slovakia, even in the villages. Instead the newspapers and the book had attained a circulation of which most ardent Slovak patriots dared not dream in the old day. Only one Slovak daily had existed under Hungarian rule and 22 weeklies, 170 other periodicals of various intellectual and professional pursuits. Only one Slovak library in Turcansky Svatymartin was tolerated by the Hungarians. Nor was there among the peasantry any pronounced urge for books. Shut off from the outside world, with few schools of their own, with a limited number of intelligentsia, and these either suppressed or subservient to Hungarian policy, the book had not become a source of pleasure, or an object of necessity to any significant part of the population. Few books were printed in the native language. Even the Bible had long remained untranslated. Now there were 3106 libraries in Slovak communities with 603,386 volumes in circulation, and in 20 years of the Republic 20 million copies of books and pamphlets on a multitude of subjects had come off the printing

presses. Vast indeed was the amount of education and enlightenment that had swept over Slovakia in the years of the Czecho-Slovak Republic.

Nor would this have been possible without the highly energetic and competent if often tactless Czechs. "Why, when I first opened up a school in a Slovak community," said a Czech educator, "the people were so suspicious they wouldn't send their children to classes. They wouldn't even sell me and my teachers food. They couldn't believe that it was possible for them to have schools in their own language. They thought it was all a bluff. They knew the Hungarians had throttled all efforts to start their own schools and they were afraid they would be punished for the violation of the law. They couldn't imagine they were actually liberated from Hungarian rule." It was no easy task to launch a widespread school system in Slovakia. With their own powers the Slovaks with the best of wishes could establish only few schools. There were no more than 700 persons with enough education to qualify for teaching or for other governmental posts. But then Masaryk was a Slovak, and Steffanik was a Slovak and a number of other men in exalted government positions were Slovaks, and by a concerted effort they poured into Slovakia thousands and later tens of thousands of Czechs equipped with learning and with administrative capacity. There was no other way of lifting the backward, suppressed and untrained Slovaks to the position of nationhood and to the competence and dignity that it required, and above all to school them in the tenets and the practices of modern democracy.

But education was not the only reward which the Republic with the supreme aid of the Czechs had bestowed upon Slovakia. Hygiene, roads, industrial development, co-operatives, theatres, all followed. Between 1920 and 1930, 400 km of fresh railroad tracks were laid out in Slovakia at a cost of nearly a billion crowns. Highways for a distance of 698 km were built and 1216 km of other roads had been reconstructed. Savings mounted rapidly. In 1919 in all the banks of Slovakia deposits mounted to 1,539,000,000 crowns, and in 1936 the sum rose to nearly 5 billion crowns, thus in 17 years Slovakia had deposited in banks over 3 billion crowns. Credit co-operatives leaped up everywhere. In 1919 there were 233

of them with deposits of 56 million crowns. In 1936 their number grew to 927 and the deposits mounted to 1132 million crowns. The money lender who often enough in the village had become a scourge to the poorer peasantry was now having the ground cut from under him. The credit co-operatives not only took business away from him but compelled him as a matter of self-preservation to make charges for loans no higher than theirs or even lower.

Electrification made rapid strides forward even in the villages. In 1919 only 67,500,000 kilowatt hours of electric current was produced in the country but in 1937 the figure had jumped to 410,000,000. In the years between 1928 and 1936 no less than 590 villages had electric light made available to them, and in 1930 it had been made available to 830 villages, and subsequently every fourth village had the use of electric illumination. Building likewise had attained unheard of triumphs. In the 9 years between 1921 and 1930 for every four old buildings, one new one had been erected. In Bratislava, in Zhilina, in Koshitce, the Czech administrators with the help of the ever-rising number of Slovak recruits from the schools, the factories, the business offices, had launched far-reaching building booms.

Likewise health institutions of all kinds were being opened. Old institutions were being overhauled, new ones built; five public hospitals, two sanatoriums for tuberculous patients, six private sanatoriums, five general health institutes. Slovakia had become the playground and the health resort of the Republic.

In consequence of the fresh energies and fresh wealth that the Republic had made possible, the Slovak population was growing in numbers, and it was *Slovak*, registered as such, trained as such, exalted as such. In the old days pressures were exerted by Hungarian officials on Slovaks to register, not as members of their own race or nationality, but as Hungarians. Nor were these pressures without success. The prospect of reward in the form of an appointment to a governmental position or to some lucrative private job tempted some Slovaks into denationalization, but only some. Still between 1900 and 1910 the Slovaks had lost through this process of Magyration over 100,000 souls. No pressures of that nature were now permitted. A Slovak was a Slovak. In 1921 in all Slovakia there was a population of 2,998,244, of whom 68 per cent were

Slovaks. In 1930 the population had risen to 3,329,793, and the percentage of Slovaks was now 72.09 per cent. Slovaks were proving more fecund than any other group in Slovakia.

Industrialization had started in Slovakia in the old days. But in 1914 there were only 40,000 industrial workers there. Trade unions were not permitted. There was no legal work day and the 10-hour day was universal. Workers were insured against sickness and accident but not against old age and unemployment. Since 1929 the country had enjoyed a substantial industrial boom, with new chemical, steel, iron, machine building factories providing labour for fresh thousands. The number of industrial workers had risen to over 100,000 and trade unions were permitted, in fact encouraged officially, and workers were insured against sickness, accident, old age and unemployment. Instead of remaining predominantly an agricultural land Slovakia under the Republic was becoming also a land of the machine.

The political emancipation had introduced a fresh conception of citizenship to the Slovak population. Under Hungary the right to vote was determined by economic status, by the amount of property a man had and the sum he paid in taxes. Women were barred from the vote. Besides, the government took it upon itself again and again to set up its own candidates. In Horska Skolitsa for example the Hungarian military on the day of the election had shut all roads to the town so that peasants couldn't go in and vote. Enraged by this arbitrary effort to prevent them by force from the exercise of what they regarded as their legitimate rights, the peasants started an attack on the soldiery. Had not Father Okanik, a Slovak priest who later rose to the rank of a Monseigneur, intervened the town might have been deluged with blood.

Before the war there were only 200,000 voters in the Slovakian lands and the Slovaks had only two deputies in the Hungarian Parliament and whenever they rose to make an address they were obliged to use the Hungarian language. In 1935 1,790,000 citizens cast their ballots in Slovakia and they elected sixty-one deputies to the Parliament and thirty to the Senate. In both houses these men might make addresses in their own language. Slovaks had risen to positions of highest eminence in the government. Since the establishment of the Republic 14 Slovaks had been members of the

Cabinet 63 times. In the Ministry of the Interior in all manner of capacities 2957 Slovaks were employed in Slovakia alone and 113 more in Czech regions and in Carpathia. In the gendarmerie there were 1133 Slovaks, and in the offices of local and district notaries 900. In the judiciary Slovaks had been attaining increasing prominence with 227 of them on the list of active judges, 81 in the so-called preparatory judicial service and with Dr. Fajonor and Dr. Zaturestsky as heads of the Supreme Court of the Republic. The Minister of Justice, Dr. Ivan Derer, was a Slovak. The Prime Minister, Hodza, was a Slovak. Four of the ministers in foreign lands were Slovaks. The post office had on its payroll 5626 Slovaks, 4018 of them in Slovakian and the rest in Czech territories and in sub-Carpathia. On the railways 14,562 Slovaks had been given employment. Thus in the official life of the country Slovaks had attained high and widespread distinction, of a kind that never would have been granted them under Hungarian rule. Had not Tiso, once Prime Minister of Hungary, proclaimed in 1912 that the country was no longer facing a Slovak problem because there were no longer any Slovaks in the land?

Immense also was the self-esteem which the Republic had stirred in the Slovak. He had known only obeisance under Hungary. He was inferior to the Hungarian, to the official, or to any one in a uniform or with authority over him. Since every tenth Hungarian was a nobleman, low or high, he needed ever to be mindful of the homage that he was to accord to any member of the nobility. "Your Excellency," "Your Highness," "Your Illustriousness," and other appellations that had lingered in Hungary for centuries he was under obligation to respect. He saw the world divided into numerous categories, high and low, with himself, especially if he was a peasant, in the very lowest. But the Republic had made a clean sweep of these differentiations. Titles were wiped out, appellations of homage were denounced, superiorities of one man over another because of birth were outlawed. The young generation rapidly cast aside the old sense of inferiority and lifted high its head. It was an honour now and a glory to be a Slovak!

I have dealt at length on the transformations that the Revolution had wrought in Slovaks and in Slovakia because a knowledge of the nature and magnitude of this transformation is indispensable to an

appraisal of the issues involved in the conflict between Slovaks, or rather Hlinka Slovaks, and the Czechs. I confess that to me, after a survey of the achievements in Slovakia during the twenty years of the Republic, the conflict seemed the height of absurdity and more than a threat to the welfare of both peoples, particularly of the Slovaks. True enough there had been errors and wrongs. At the beginning of the Revolution, Czech Legionnaires who had come to Slovakia on official missions had been swept away by revolutionary fervour, and had indulged in deeds which gave offence to the church-going Slovak. They tore down or desecrated crosses in schools and in other ways manifested a hostility to Slovak clericalism and to the Church in which the Slovaks worshipped. Soon enough sound judgment gained the ascendancy and such acts of hooliganism ceased.

Initially there was also a move to distribute among the peasantry the lands of the churches. But that too was scrapped and the Church remained in possession of its properties. There was further a tendency to ban religious schools. That was abandoned—for Slovakia. In the years immediately after the war, with the feeling of protest against the pre-war world assuming in many lands the nature of rebellion more or less violent, it was only natural that Czechoslovakia should also succumb to the fever. But the voices of revolt died down or were silenced, acts of disrespect towards any church disappeared and in Slovakia the Church enjoyed, unmolested and more than ever, its authority and its privileges. "Is there any country in the world," said a Monseigneur who was opposed to Hlinka, "where our Church and our clergymen are treated with greater respect and solicitude? Think of it, if a parish is too poor to pay a priest a living salary the Government make up the difference. Have you got anything like it in America? Of course not. The Church in Slovakia has kept all its own lands, has many schools and in all our schools in the whole Republic religious instruction is given to those who register a desire for it, and again the clergyman is honoured. I don't understand this man Hlinka." Yet for years this man, Jiriga, had worked with Hlinka for the liberation of their people.

But multitudes of Slovaks followed him—clergy and laity. The leaders of the People's Party grew more and more impassioned in

their support of the venerable Father from the town of Rozhemberok. They would obey his commands unquestioningly, because to them he was the leader of their people, the one they accepted without cavil or reservation. Of course other Slovaks, university men and clergymen of rank, fought against his influence. They resented bitterly the privileges he was appropriating as a clergyman for purely political purposes. When, for example, Monseigneur Okanik was elected on the Agrarian ticket as Senator his Bishop didn't allow him to fill his post. Okanik had to resign, and supporters of the learned Monseigneur, as devoted to the Roman Catholic Church as any of Hlinka's followers, laid this ruling of the Bishop to Hlinka's influence. Hlinka didn't relish the idea of another clergyman becoming a political leader in Slovakia, at least this was the view of Okanik's friends.

In the course of an election campaign in 1929 the Hlinka Party printed posters showing Christ leading a procession of his disciples. The purpose of the poster was to impress voters with the idea that they were to follow Hlinka as the disciples followed the Lord. There was an angry outburst against this manner of campaigning and in one place someone plastered the poster with mud. Instantly the Hlinka supporters cried out that infidels, presumably Czechs, were desecrating the image of the Lord!

To me the feud between Hlinka and the Czechs was all the more tragic because the two peoples, the Czechs and Slovaks, stem from the same race, worship mostly in the same Church, and their languages are so similar that knowing one makes it easy to understand the speech and writing of the other. Even I with my knowledge of Russian and with only a few months' study of Czech had no difficulty in reading Slovak newspapers or carrying on a conversation in the Slovak language. After all it was the Czechs with their more advanced civilization who had started the process of transforming Slovakia politically, economically, and culturally and of helping it to become a nation with a life of its own. More than that, the Czechs had always been partial to the artistic talents and achievements of the Slovaks. No songs were more popular among Czechs than Slovak folk songs. The Slovak wine cellars in Prague were always crowded with Czechs who responded with enthusiasm to the merry lilt or the plaintive wail of the Slovak

melodies. Whenever a Slovak choir gave a concert in Prague the hall was crowded. Slovak embroideries, among the finest in the world, found a ready market among Czechs. In all the time that I had been in Prague and other Czech towns, whenever I made known to friends my prospective journey to Slovakia, they instantly burst into talk about the wonders of this or that Slovak village—its songs, its costumes, its architecture, or its folk ways—and urged me to go there and see it all with my own eyes. "We have nothing like it in our country," Czechs would say to me again and again. Indeed, Slovakia had become a symbol of something alive and joyous and beautiful, something which Czechs no longer had, but loved and revered. All of which made the clash between Czechs and Slovaks increasingly incomprehensible.

I had therefore hoped for a vast amount of enlightenment from Hlinka. I had in fact written out a long list of subjects and questions which I wished to discuss with him. I felt that none of his disciples could offer as illuminating explanations as he, for after all he was a man of learning, a clergyman of high rank, and all his life he had been in rebellion against the old Hungarian regime. But now he was dead, and I could only pay him the homage of seeing his body in a coffin and attend his burial. So I started for Rozhemberok, deep in the lower Tatra Mountains.

It was Sunday morning, bright and sunny. The train on which I travelled was so heavy with passengers that the light locomotive chugged along at a slow pace like a panting horse. At every station crowds sought to push their way into the coaches. Hallways and compartments were jammed, yet more and more passengers attempted to fight their way inside. Slovaks, like Russians, had no trust in the conductor when his word clashed with their immediate desire. And, like Russians, they were irrepressibly loquacious.

But then on this particular day had I been in a compartment with the most proper-minded Czechs, they would easily have become articulate. In the morning I had received my mail from Prague with letters from America and other countries, and as soon as I seated myself in my compartment I started to read my letters. Now the sight of a letter with a foreign stamp makes even a Czech forget that he is a Czech. Stamp collecting is a national hobby, perhaps a

national madness. And so the bright American stamps on my letters roused the urge in my neighbours. Said one, a man with dark eyes and a black moustache:

“ Maybe you don’t need those stamps?”

Instantly a mother with a little girl whose eyes bulged with envy, said to me:

“ My daughter loves American stamps,” and opposite me a red-faced young man with thick glasses and in the dress of a theological student said in a melodious voice:

“ I’d be so much obliged to you if I could have one of your stamps.” Luckily I had enough to go around and for a while the excitement over them crowded from our minds all thought of the funeral.

Meanwhile, our train went slower and slower. Not only was it getting heavier with passengers but the trains ahead were so close to one another that they had to slacken their pace. Then our train stopped and my neighbour with the moustaches looked out of the window and gave me a nudge.

“ Look there,” he said, “ at the base of the mountain—that’s Chernova—Hlinka’s birthplace.”

We all looked out. “ It is a small village,” my neighbour went on, “ and d’you see the steeple of the church? That was Hlinka’s church. That’s where Hungarian soldiers once had a shooting party.” I had heard of the shooting party and of the commotion it had caused in Slovakia and far beyond. “ Too bad,” the man with the moustaches resumed, “ you can see so little of the church from here, it’s very beautiful. But maybe you could walk to Chernova and see it?”

“ I shall, indeed,” I said. “ I shall walk to Chernova and see the whole village.”

The seminary student eyed me with approval. A follower of the dead priest, evidently it pleased him to hear a foreign writer say he would walk from Rozemberok to Chernova to see the village of his hero’s birth.

We waited and waited and the longer we waited the more unbearable was the heat in the coach. Still, with talkative Slovaks one soon forgets discomfort.

At last we reached Rozemberok. At least the conductor

announced the station, though none was immediately in sight. Ahead strings of coaches cluttered the tracks and our train could proceed no farther. With shouts of relief the passengers tumbled out of the coaches, and I followed them, the man with the moustaches helping me with my baggage.

"Oh, by the way," said he, "see these open coaches on the narrow-gauge track?" I nodded. "They go to Koritnitsa, and if you want to spend a few days in beautiful mountains, I'd advise you to go there."

"Maybe I will," I said and hastened to join the procession of pilgrims which was moving towards the centre of the town.

They came from all over the country, from nearby valleys and from far-away mountains. Sunburned and sturdy, these Slovaks appeared outwardly less metropolitan than Czechs or Moravian Slovaks. They gave one an impression of shyness, or of enforced reserve, like villagers everywhere who rarely go to town and who when they come there feel awkward and apprehensive. But this was true only of the men, not at all of the women, least of all of the girls. They felt expansively at home. Perhaps it was because they were in their festive attire, and inwardly glowed with pleasure at the appreciation and admiration that city people so generously bestowed on them. Never had I seen such a spectacular display of raiment, not even in Blahotnitz. Here at every hand were walking flower gardens or walking museums, for in other lands only in museums could men behold such a prodigious variety of extravagant colours as now dazzled the eye. It was evidently more than a custom, it was a duty for a village to fashion out of its own fantasy with its own hands these resplendent waists and skirts, belts and aprons. Still, one young man outdid himself and also the girls in boldness of conception and magnificence of execution. Only a person learned in the technique of apparel-making could fittingly describe the tails and folds, the corners and projections of his blue and purple waistcoat, his richly embroidered trousers and the band of bare body at the waist which enhanced the brilliance of design and decoration. His hat made him the hero or the madman of the moment. An ordinary enough hat it was, small in size, with an abbreviated rim, with a scarlet ribbon round its crown, but in the back it was haloed with a freshly-cut pine bough from which

fluttered long ribbons of many colours. Perhaps the bough was a symbol of a momentous human urge. Perhaps it was all only an expression of a wild caprice. In his face or in his manner the young man revealed no clue. He seemed calm enough and unmindful of the curiosity he had stirred. He was followed by a delegation of girls, all in costumes, and whenever he stopped they clustered round him with the pride and solicitude of sisters glorying in the heroism of a brother.

Black banners and drapes hung from windows and doorways, from shops and homes. Portraits of the dead priest in shop windows were draped in black, set around with flowers and candles. Even Jewish shopkeepers vied with their Christian neighbours in the public display of sorrow, this in spite of the increasing hostility of the Hlinka press to their race. Peddlers were selling multitudes of Hlinka mementoes, badges, pins, also postal cards, portraits, crosses and busts. Avidly the visitors were buying these mementoes to pin on their lapels or their bosoms or to take home and add to family heirlooms for generations to come. In all their history they had had only one Hlinka, priest, rebel, patriot, loved as deeply as he was hated. The town swarmed with those to whom he had been avenger and foe as well as those to whom he had been saviour and prophet.

Peasants' appetites, like their sunburn, are always with them, and so the food-stands did a thriving business. The men and the women were buying sausage and pickles, white bread and cheese, candies and ginger snaps, ice cream and water melon. What good is a visit to the city, even though it be to attend the funeral of a great man, without a taste of the delicacies that were as much a part of the trip as the wearing of the holiday dress?

More and more crowds made their way up the hill towards the square, where stood the school Hlinka had built, his home, the old church in which he had ministered, where he now lay in a glass coffin. I too went up the hill. The white arm band which I obtained from the friendly young man in the administration office opened all lines and all doors for me, and presently I was in the queue waiting my turn to be allowed inside the church for a glimpse of the coffin. I waited long and then the doors opened but because of the crowds that scrambled for a chance to view the body, the

ushers never stopped murmuring, "Hurry, hurry, please hurry—out this way quick." The purple cap, the purple robe over the body, the white cross in the hands, made an impressive and cheerless sight. I wished I could remain and study the face with its sharp features, its big mouth, its lofty brow, its expression of unrest, but the usher nudged me by the arm and motioned me to pass on.

On the square again and with time on my hands I wondered if I could search out one or more of the leaders of the Hlinka Party and talk to them. In this hour of sorrow they might be in a heart-searching if not forgiving mood and they might express themselves with more grace than harshness. And I wanted to hear a Hlinka spokesman now more than ever, with grief and challenge brooding over the sun-flooded Hlinka square and with German armies massing and the German press pelting Czechoslovakia with all the insults and scurilities known to the human tongue and with a delegation of eminent Henleinists at Rozemberok to demonstrate their appreciation of the person and the policies of the dead priest.

Here then was Julius Stano, secretary to the Hlinka Party. Short, superbly built, with large and shiny black eyes that seemed as if to plead for understanding, and with a low and melodious voice, he laid the grievances of his party before me. He spoke excellent English. After all, he proceeded, Slovaks were a separate nation, why then should they not be accorded the privileges and perogatives of nationhood? Czechs were saying that there was little difference between the Czech and Slovak language. But the fact remained that Slovaks didn't understand Czech well and Czechs didn't understand Slovak well. Here was the word for *stick*. In Czech it was "hul," in Slovak "palitza." Were the words alike?

Yes, Slovaks felt grateful to the Czechs for the work they had done in Slovakia. But why were they discriminating against Slovaks? The Government had built fortresses in Slovakia, why weren't Slovak's engineers engaged for the job? After all there was the Pittsburgh agreement which Masaryk himself had drawn and which he had signed on May 30th, 1918, when he was already nominally President of the Republic. This agreement proposed a separate parliament, a separate judicial system, a separate school

system, for Slovakia and in the Slovak language. Why weren't the Slovaks favoured with the fulfilment of this agreement? True, on the founding of the Republic, Czech teachers came to the schools and Czech officials came to the offices because Slovaks had a small intelligentsia of their own, but many of these teachers didn't know the Slovak language and taught in Czech. Wasn't that a violation of the pledge of Slovak independence? Now the Slovaks had their own intelligentsia and they could dispense with the services of the Czechs, but Czechs remained in their comfortable berths because Prague said they must. It was Prague and not Bratislava that ruled Slovakia. Even the gendarmerie was made up overwhelmingly of Czechs, to the extent of 80 or 90 per cent, and some of these gendarmes had as little education, no more, than many Slovaks. On the railroad likewise the majority of the workers were Czechs. In Bratislava there were at the moment 60 Slovak young men who had diplomas from the law school and were without employment. Why shouldn't they be assigned to legal positions in Slovakia and displace immigrant Czechs? Yes, and in the post office too the majority of the employees were Czechs.

And then when a Slovak went abroad he was known as a Czecho-Slovak, but when a Czech went abroad he called himself a Czech. The only jobs that Slovaks got were those of servants and labourers. True in Bratislava there was a theatre in Czech and in Slovak, but in Brno and in Prague there were theatres only in Czech. Slovaks constituted 23 per cent of the population and were entitled in the Central Government to 23 per cent of the jobs. But they weren't getting them, in the ministries of Labour, Commerce, Social Welfare, only about 2 or 3 Slovaks were annually favoured with appointments. In Parliament there were 230 clerks and only one of them was a Slovak. The diplomas in the university were printed in the Czech language. Why? The bulletins also were written and printed in the Czech language. Why? The previous winter there was a demonstration of the students against this constant flaunting of the Czech language. Of course some of the Czech professors in the university had even gone on record as saying there was no Slovakian language. That was how much respect Czechs evinced towards Slovakian indepen-

dence. And then Czechs always formed separate clans. Even in such an exclusively Slovak city as Turcansky Svatymartin, cradle of Slovak culture and home of Slovak nationalism, the Czechs persisted in having a club of their own.

No, Slovaks didn't want separation. They realized they needed union with the Czechs. They wanted one National Government, but they demanded their own Slovakian Government, a Slovakian Parliament and a Slovakian Cabinet. "Czechs should support culture . . . Slovakia won't be a colony . . . Slovakia is a separate nation and wants to fulfill its own national destiny . . . We have a language and a culture of our own and we are proud of both and want to cultivate both to the best of our ability."

On and on the serious minded and eloquent Julius Stano talked and I wrote down his words. They gave me a fresh insight into the minority problem of Czechoslovakia, and opened up vistas of speculation on the age old and ever troubled subject of racial and national adjustments in Central Europe and the hate and the blood they had always loosened on their hate-scorched and blood-soaked lands. I couldn't help thinking of America, a massive nation with endless blocks of foreign populations and yet with no problem of national minorities. I had known Slovaks in America, in Chicago, in Gary, Indiana, in Cleveland and I had never heard any of them speak of the English language in the spirit of revolt with which the young, engaging, and exceptionally brilliant Stano had spoken of the Czech language or with which Czechs had often spoken of the German language, or Germans of the Slovak and Czech languages. I had known immigrants in America, in cities and on farms, men of middle age and older who had sweated blood over their English lessons. They did it not because of the campaigns of Americanization which now and then sweep over the country, but because they knew deep in their hearts that in their knowledge of the language of the country of their adoption, and in their identification with its people and its culture lay profit and happiness.

But in lands like Germany of old and old Russia, and old Austro-Hungary where for hundreds of years democracy was as unknown as autocracy was cherished, no such course of voluntary choice was left to alien peoples. Always there were efforts to

impose amalgamation by authority, by threat, by guile, by blood. The more backward the people were—peasantries for example—the more stubbornly they resisted encroachment on their national or racial identity. That was why all the attempts of the Hapsburgs, stretching for over three centuries, to suck the Czechs into Germanic blood, had gone for naught. Their aristocracy and intelligentsia annihilated, the Czech peasantry with the stubbornness and the power of the very soil into which they had burrowed, warded off all blows on their national identity. They were content enough to remain Czechs and to suffer the consequences.

The Slovaks did likewise. They too, with hardly any intelligentsia in their midst, peasants all, pushed back from the fertile valleys and from the main highways into harsh mountain regions, struggled with a barren soil and a raw climate for over one thousand years.

When ushered into nationhood, people like them couldn't but bristle with fury at acts or words which they interpreted as imatical to their new destiny. The Czechs should have known it, for no people have had more reason to understand better than they the meaning and the misery of national frustration. From the earliest days of the Republic they should have refrained from acts and words which the over sensitive and still groping Slovak might rightly or wrongly mistake for enmity or insult. For a Czech professor to speak with mockery of the Slovak language was the height of rudeness. For university bulletins in Bratislava to be written and printed in the Czech language was a slap in the face of the Slovak. For the diplomas to graduates of a Slovak university to be printed in Czech was no less an insult and a transgression. Discrimination in the selection of Government employees, was equally a wrong. All of these charges I had heard while in Prague from both high-minded Czechs and Slovaks and with no less an expression of regret. "We are a people without inner or outward grace," Czechs again and again in a moment of despondency would say to me. They trusted to time for a better understanding of the two peoples, which racially and linguistically had more in common with one another than over-excited Slovaks cared to admit.

Of course Slovaks—I mean the Hlinka intellectuals—continually

forgot not only their tragic past but the problems that had faced them and the Czechs at the time of the founding of the Republic and that still faced them. Here were nearly three million people—the Slovaks—with hardly any intelligentsia to do the immediate administrative work and to lay the foundation for an emancipated and independent existence. They had only twenty men who qualified as professors in the High schools. They had no more than 700 men and few women with enough learning to acquit themselves with adequacy as teachers, as clerks, as notaries, as other government functionaries. But they needed thousands, tens of thousands, and naturally enough the Czechs sent in their own people, always with the consent and encouragement of Slovaks in the Central Government. These Czechs were extraordinarily competent. They could do their job well. They could build schools. They could teach. They could run railways. They could manage post offices. They could keep faultlessly all manner of records. They could launch health campaigns. They could, in other words, build up community life and teach Slovaks to do so. With their help Slovakia boomed with activity and progress. Of course many of them were tactless and rude and even brutal. They hurt people and it was never difficult to injure the feelings of so sensitive a person as a Slovak. Benes and Masaryk approved no more of the arbitrary and rude Czechs than did Hlinka. But in spite of everything in every department of local and national life Slovakia was pushing onwards to a new destiny.

In their charges against Czechs, Slovaks didn't bother to remember the purely human aspect of the Czech government employees in Slovakia. He earned his living there. He married, perhaps a Slovak girl, or brought his wife there with him. He bought or built a house, reared a family. He had struck deep roots in the land on which he was living—and at the time of his departure for Slovakia he had been made to sacrifice opportunities for a career and a livelihood in his home. Still Hlinka Slovaks would have him dismissed and left at the mercy of the world, even when he had attained middle age or was older. They wanted his job for a Slovak, happen what might, and usually for a follower of Hlinka.

As Slovakia grew in economic and social strength, fresh oppor-

tunities for Government service were opening and more and more Slovaks were drawn into it. But Hlinka Slovaks were not content with a natural process of fulfilment. Government jobs were the most coveted plums in the country and their own people should have them, especially if they were followers of their party. The chase for Government jobs—so innate in the people of Central Europe—was and will for a long time remain one of the bitter ingredients in all minority feuds there. So the presence of Czechs in positions of responsibility and of comfortable security in Slovakia galled and dismayed Hlinka Slovaks. True enough the Slovak high schools and university were turning out annually thousands of trained men, but even so they had to build up a tradition and a technique of competence before they could universally supplant Czechs of unquestioned energy and fitness.

Meanwhile the numerous practical tasks that had to be performed not only for the upbuilding of the Slovakian nation but for the integration of the progress of the Republic, had to be entrusted to persons of superior ability and training. Mistakes of course were inevitable, for it was never easy to ascertain with the exactitude of a mathematical law the precise qualifications of an applicant, whether Czech or Slovak. But the continuous increase of the number of Slovaks in the nation's services testified to the increasing confidence of Czechs in their abilities. At the time Stano spoke to me he complained that there were sixty Slovak lawyers without employment. But only a short time later a professor of the University of Bratislava complained that not enough Slovaks were entering the law faculty, for within a short time there would be places for hundreds of new lawyers and should there not be enough Slovaks to fill the places, Czechs would have to be given assignments in Slovakia. Envious of the Czechs and really afraid of being swallowed by them, Hlinka intellectuals in their impassioned nationalism readily magnified and exaggerated every Czech indiscretion into a monumental outrage.

Nor could the Czechs remain unmindful of the political obscurantism of Hlinka and his followers. Hlinka had never been a champion of democracy, and the substantial ingredient of socialism in Czech democracy had further increased his distrust of the institution. Of course the Czechs were also Roman Catholics,

but they had been reared in western thought and in the advanced social teachings, as their political record in the country so eloquently demonstrated. But to followers of Hlinka, Czech Catholics were not really Catholics. They had absorbed too much of the spirit of Hussite protest and rebellion. Once in a copy of *The Slovak*, the chief daily journal of the Hlinka Party, I saw on the front page a list of the teachers in the Bratislava schools. They were tabulated according to nationality and religion. Slovak teachers who were Catholics were designated as such, but not Czechs. The word Catholic was omitted in the column labelled religion, presumably because to the editor Czech Catholics couldn't properly be called Catholic.

The presence in Slovakia of nearly half a million Lutherans who had always been in the vanguard of the crusade for national liberation, only aggravated the problem of Czecho-Slovak relations. The Lutherans distrusted Hlinka and even more his followers, who had neither his learning nor his grace of person nor his spiritual fervour. They were afraid of becoming victims of an old and a new fanaticism. They loathed the notion of curbs on their highly developed institutional life, in the event that the Hlinka Party with its fierce aggressiveness assumed command over the destinies of Slovakia. They opposed Hlinka with steadfastness and vigour, even those who favoured a larger measure of self-government than Slovakia had been enjoying.

Nor could the Czechs remain indifferent to the possibility of repressions which the Hlinka Party once in power might impose on other racial and national groups in their midst, the Hungarians, the Jews, the Germans. Hlinka had protected Jews against the wild outbursts of returned soldiers at the close of the war. But the Hlinka press had made anti-semitism an issue. Its attacks on Jews were increasing; they were not yet as fierce as in Germany because the censor strained out the vitriol. The Hungarians likewise looked with misgiving at the Hlinka Party. Here again there was a clash between one group of Roman Catholics and another. Nationalism averted a religious affiliation. The Ruthenians had been complaining of the encroachment of Slovaks on their nationality and of feverish efforts to Slovakianize their nationals. Even Julius Stano in his eloquent discourse on the wrongs the Czechs had been perpe-

trating on his people, couldn't refrain from deplored the resistance of Jews to Slovakianization. Themselves once victims of a thousand-year-old crusade against their national integrity, these Hlinka intellectuals evinced but slight considerations for the sentiments of other groups in their midst except possibly for the Germans.

The humane and eminently practical Czechs couldn't disregard the possible consequences that might result from an immediate grant of autonomy to Slovakia, even if other considerations, like finance, national defence, industrial and agricultural advance, had not presented difficulties that could not at once be removed.

This Czech distrust of the Hlinka People's Party was soon to be justified, in the wake of the collapse that followed the adoption of the Munich agreement. With feverish energy the Hlinka intellectuals proceeded to outlaw and repress all opposition—Communists, Socialists, Trade Unions, Liberals. They smashed windows of Czech and Jewish shops and loosed the slogan "Czechs and Jews, get out." In town after town they herded Jews together and drove them away. With enthusiasm they rushed themselves into totalitarian uniforms, the totalitarian salute, totalitarian laws, totalitarian brutality. They wouldn't even have a Czech hangman. There was only one for the whole country and he was a Czech but they would have only a Slovak executioner, and because they couldn't find one whose competence they could trust, they postponed the carrying out of the sentence of death on three men.

The hour for the funeral procession was nearing and I went back to the square and stationed myself near the entrance of the church. The place was crowded chiefly with clergymen, theological students, monks and soldiers. Presently a crowd of women marched into the yard, wearing black kerchiefs and in sombre dresses. They were from the village of Chernova and were given a place of honour in the procession, immediately behind the white-robed clerics. It was then that my eye caught the bust of a man with finely-parted thick hair and with a reflective expression in his face, immediately in the corner of Hlinka's house and below his residence. On close scrutiny I made out the words "R. W. Seton-Watson" and two inscriptions, one above and the other below the bust and both in English. The one above read :

Defended the Slovak nation in time of oppression,  
helped it in the fight for freedom.

The inscription below read :

In recognition of his thirty years' work for the Slovaks  
erected with gratitude by the young Slovak generation.

Here then was an appreciation of a foreigner, an Englishman, a university professor, who had made the cause of Slovak liberation his own and who had known Hlinka in the days of his martyrdom but who loved Slovaks and humanity too much to view calmly the obscurantism in the life of Hlinka's later years. Still this was no time for the remembrance of grudges, and the bust of the Englishman, to me at least, was like an emblem of Hlinka's earlier and nobler efforts.

The hour struck four and the bells started to toll. Slowly the coffin was brought out of the church, a ray of sun struck the cross in the waxen hands and the top of it gleamed like a jewel. Up on a dais amidst tiers of shrubs and wreaths and palm plants the coffin was lifted, and the burning Greek fires enhanced the pallor of the sunken face and the brightness of the purple robe and the purple cap. From every vantage point, from the windows and the balconies of nearby buildings, could be seen the coffin and the body within, and thousands of eyes were now fixed on it—this quiet flesh of once so mighty a man.

I studied the face—that seemed divided now—into two parts, each expressive of a different nature. The jaw and the mouth and part of the nose were bathed in sunshine, the lips seemed curved in a smile. It was easy to imagine it a smile of gratitude to his countrymen for the tribute they were according him. But the upper part of the face was shadowed as if with pain and wrath. Then suddenly the sun slid away from the lower part of his face and all of it was now a mask of indignation and anguish. In his death Hlinka seemed more the fighter than the martyr!

The service started and the square was so silent with reverence that those who stood near the bier could hear the rustle of the shrubs and the palms. On the porch of the dead man's house the

Slovak male choir had assembled. They sang *Otce Nas* (Our Father), they chanted a hymn in Latin and in the native tongue the melancholy of *Kratky Cas* (The Brief Hour). Sobs were audible and tears streamed down many faces. But it wasn't until the funeral moved to the cemetery and the choir burst into *Hoje Bozhe*, that grief snapped the nerves of the vast assemblage of mourners and all wept silently. There was no hysterics, no cries of lament. After all Hlinka had gone to his Maker and he had lived a long and pious if turbulent life.

In the mountains the sun was setting. Somewhere a huge fire was lighted, and Andrey Hlinka had become a memory to stir holy and unholy emotions.

Only a few months later his followers in their impassioned revulsions against the reproofs of Seton-Watson, the man they had once revered, and in response to his own request, removed his bust from the Hlinka Square and plastered up the tributes they had inscribed to him.

## Chapter VIII

### CITADEL OF HUMANITARIANISM

I HAD planned to spend the night in Rozhemberok, but the heat, the crowds, the packed hotels, the uncertainty of accommodation prompted me to go elsewhere. I had a list of villages which Professor Korvash of Bratislava had given me, with notes on the specific attractions of each of them. But which village should it be? I was still in a state of indecision when I reached the railroad station, and on sight of the open coaches on the narrow-gauge railway I remembered the advice of the man with the blazing moustaches and without another thought I resolved to go for a few days to the mountain resort that bore the harsh name of Korynitsa.

The station agent told me that the train would leave in half an hour. But an hour later more passengers were still squeezing into our already packed compartment. Two hours later the train was still there. One of my legs went to sleep. I wanted to stand up and stretch but it was impossible to budge an inch. A giant of a man in a black felt hat and a black suit peered into our compartment.

"No room," cried a girl.

But with a violent push that knocked our heads together he wedged himself inside.

"See, plenty of room!" he said, mopping his brow, laughing in triumph.

No one was annoyed. Every one laughed with him.

At last the train gave two sharp whistles. A cry of joy went up. We were actually starting for the mountains!

Korynitsa was an obscure little corner of Tatra, one of Slovakia's mountain ranges. Spread like a clover leaf in an undulating mountain valley, it was hemmed around with high, steep, and timber-covered mountains. It was a health resort which boasted of mineral waters that were supposed to vie in chemical composition with those of Carlsbad. Promoters of the place spoke of it as the Slovakian

Carlsbad, and prophesied for it world renown. The pretty buildings with their bright paint of red, white and yellow and the superbly paved footpaths, that laced their way in and out of the valley, were a cheerful contrast to the wildness of the natural scene. Here were mineral baths and mineral fountains, outdoor verandas and gardens, a swimming pool and tennis courts, orchestral music and a dance hall, concerts before and after every meal, a café with newspapers and with tables for bridge and chess, small rooms simply furnished but clean and airy and commanding a view of sky and mountain and forest that would stir the most somnolent imagination; breakfast, lunch, midday tea and dinner, that is four meals—all at the cost in American money of two and a half dollars a day! More than ever was I impressed with the cheapness of accommodations in Czechoslovakia. Here was no swank and no extravagance, but all the comfort and abundance in the world. People in Czechoslovakia might have little money, but every crown commanded real value. In food and in lodging few countries in the world could boast of so high a standard of living for the masses.

I had gone to Korynitsa not for a health cure but for a holiday, to climb mountains, to fish, and in a quiet way to shuffle together impressions and experiences, and to digest the mass of documentary information I had accumulated. It was time that I started drawing up a balance of all that I had seen and heard and felt and read, and Korynitsa, in addition to the lure of sturdy outdoor diversion, seemed an ideal retreat for study and contemplation.

On my first morning there it started to rain. All day and all night it poured and all the next day. The mountains and the trees were dark and gray with mist. The stream that coursed through the grounds of the resort roared and foamed with swollen waters. The lanes turned into puddles of mud. There was nothing to do but to stay in the room or in the café, where an open fire was blazing and where stranded vacationists had gathered to play games, to talk, to read the newspapers, to listen to music, and above all to eat and drink. On the third day the skies cleared and the sun came out and the woods and mountains gleamed with freshness and beauty. Together with two Czech girls I climbed a mountain. We were planning to visit the Slovak shepherds who tended flocks of sheep on the mountain tops and in the

mountain valleys—those big-boned, sturdy, serious-faced men in tight-fitting white woollen trousers and short embroidered jackets, whom I had seen at the Hlinka funeral and who seemed like giants out of a fairy story. But no sooner had we reached the summit of the mountain than the rain came down again. There was nothing to do but to return to the resort and when we reached it, cold and drenched and disgusted with the world, the young Slovak manager cheerfully assured us that with only brief breaks the rain would continue for at least a week.

I had read that in Sweden the cure for social ills was “the middle way,” a levelling compromise of conflicting interests. But Sweden was not on the main highway of power politics. She had a homogenous population and no real problems of nationality, religion or race. Then, too, she had functioned as an independent nation for a long time.

Czechoslovakia enjoyed none of these advantages. She had been in existence only twenty years. She lay on the main highway of party politics. She was surrounded by enemies bristling with jealousy and revenge. She had inherited from the war and from old Austria-Hungary, not only a shattered economic structure, but all the racial religious and nationalist troubles with which Francis Joseph’s Empire was overburdened and which under the impetus of the war had only become intensified. “It is a Europe in miniature,” said the late Karel Capek, “it is the European West and the European East so to say—in the palm of one’s hand”—and with all the ills that afflicted both.

But it had the good fortune of being headed by a group of remarkable men, the so-called “professors” Thomas Masaryk, a Slovak professor of philosophy and political science, Benes, a Czech and professor of sociology, and Steffanik, a Slovak and teacher of astronomy. These “professors” were the guiding spirit of Czechoslovak emancipation, the midwives and the nurses of the Republic. Slavs all of them they were unlike any Slav or any other intelligentsia on the European continent. In other lands the intelligentsia though noble enough of tongue had collapsed under the burden of the political responsibilities which the war and the peace had thrust on them. In Russia they were crushed by the Bolsheviks. In Germany they were trampled to destruction by Hitler. In

Czechoslovakia they remained triumphant. Czechoslovakia was the one country in Europe in which the college professor and the intellectual had vindicated not only his dream but his class. His ideas prevailed, and his chief concern was to fit them into a democratic framework. He abhorred the thought of violence and totalitarianism, whether of the right or of the left. He would override hate, trouble, conflict by the peaceful authority of democratic usage. There was nothing that preoccupied and excited him so much as democracy, not only as an ideal but as a way of life. He would inoculate the whole population, especially the youth of the land with a faith in it, an all pervasive indomitable faith which could withstand the blandishments and the threats of the nearby dictatorships.

"By violence," asks Masaryk, "or moderation, with a plough or with a sword?" And he answers. "By compromise, with the plough, by work—that is the answer of the Czech spirit and of Czech history."

Certainly the Czech people were ready for such an answer. The battle of the White Mountain on November 8th, 1620, had not only ended their independence but had left them leaderless. Their aristocracy and intelligentsia had been annihilated. They became a nation of peasants.

"There is scarcely one of us (Czechs)" said Masaryk, "who wasn't born in a peasant hunt, and if he wasn't his father was." They had no ruling class and never developed it. Nor had they ever acquired the swank, the haughtiness, the grace, the lavishness of a ruling class. They were common people and chose to remain so. In all my contacts with Czechs, the wealthy, the poor, the intelligentsia, I never sensed any effort to ape the manners, the habits, the extravagances of a ruling class. The leisured class of whom Veblein wrote, existed neither in an economic nor in a psychological sense in Czechoslovakia. There was no effort on the part of any one "to keep up with the Joneses," because there were no Joneses. Always the Czechs would be their own industrious, frugal, modest selves.

Hereditary titles stir in them neither admiration nor respect. The words *Graf*, *Prinz*, *Baron* leave them unmoved. That was why with the coming of the Republic it was easy for them to abolish

titles. They will recognize no social superiority conferred by inheritance. Only a title won from a university evokes respect. Wives of physicians love to be addressed as *Pani*\* Doctor, and of engineers as *Pani* Engineer. But such titles are earned and represent individual talent or distinction. Thus the democratic heritage and character of the Czechs furnished the professors with a fit psychological background for the upbuilding of a democratic republic.

From its very beginning the inequalities of race, religion, nationality and sex were brushed aside, and the people became "the sole fountain of authority." Any citizen, male or female, with or without property or income, on attaining the 21st birthday might vote in elections to Parliament and on attaining the 26th birthday might vote in elections to the Senate. Suffrage was secret and universal for Czechs as well as for Hungarians, Jews, Germans, and other nationalities. Freedom of speech and assembly were guaranteed. On the news-stands in Prague one might buy *Die Zeit*, the Henleinist newspapers as freely as the *Prager Presse*, Benes's mouthpiece in the German language. Only a short distance away from the main street one might visit Henleinist headquarters for pamphlets, books, bulletins, which in addition to statements of grievances, bristled with attacks on Czechs, on the principles of democracy. In Slovakia there was a press censorship intended to hold back the obscurantism and intolerance of the Hlinka Party. But in the schools there was freedom of thought. A teacher might espouse any political cause or profess any religion or faith he chose. He might be a free-thinker, an atheist, actively so, and in no danger of dismissal. No nation in the world enjoyed a larger measure of political freedom than did Czechoslovakia.

In its economic policies Czechoslovakia evinced no less regard for democratic usage than in its politics. It was no mere boast on the part of Benes when he said that his country had achieved reforms which in other lands were still a subject of incessant controversy. Consider the manner in which the Republic had settled the land problem—which under Austria-Hungary had been a source of continual friction and disaffection. In Bohemia and Moravia-Silesia there were in the pre-war times 401 estates with an area of

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over 2500 acres each. In Slovakia and Ruthenia there were nearly 1000 estates each comprising at least 1000 acres. While about 1000 families held sway over more than one fourth of all the lands in the Republic, about 70 per cent of the small farmers held in their possession only 6.5 per cent of it. One family, the Schwartzbergs, had spread itself over 187 estates with an area of almost half a million acres. Some of the well-to-do bishops were likewise among the large landholders. The Czech and Slovak peasantry had always been land-hungry and were in a mood for radical action to acquire possession of lands which they needed for the sustenance of themselves and their families.

But in the solution of this explosive problem the college professors who ruled Czechoslovakia guided themselves by none of the emotions which the landlord class had whipped up in the peasantry. They would resort neither to revenge nor to punishment. They would confiscate no lands, except those of the imperial family. They would treat the problem with business acumen, and with justice, as they understood the word, to landlords and peasants. They would buy up the estates, that is the portions that were subject to purchase and they would sell these to the peasants. A landlord might remain the owner of 625 acres, 375 for tillage and the remainder as forest and pasture. But the remainder of his holding the government would acquire, and pay him for it, not the skyrocketing prices which the war and the shortage of food caused, but those which had prevailed in the pre-war days. The landlords grumbled. But it did them no good. The professors were determined to solve the land problem without violence and without damage to property or persons. "By compromise, with the plough, by work," was no mere slogan to the professors.

The Republic took over about one fourth of the land and by the end of 1935 it had sold four and a half million acres to individual farmers and nearly 700,000 acres of wood and pasture to communal or co-operative organizations. If a farmer had no cash he received credit from the Land Office or from a credit co-operative. The state had loaned to peasants over 70 million dollars for land and sometimes for equipment. Thus without violence, without jeopardy to the production of the country's food, without even violating the principle of private property, purely as

a matter of business, with the power and authority of the state behind it, Czechoslovakia carried out one of the most stupendous reforms of our time.

Consider now the labour policies which the professors promulgated. The 60-hour week had been the custom in old Austro-Hungary, except in the mines where the 9-hour day had obtained. On December 19th, 1918, the 8-hour day was made compulsory even on the land and with no overtime except in trades in which weather played a decisive part, such as agriculture or building. Subsequently a number of employers out of their own accord adopted the eight hour day and the five day week. All workers including those in the employ of the Government had the right to form into associations of their own for purposes of collective bargaining. Employers were forbidden to interfere with the exercise of this right. Still it was not always enforced. It had not been in the case of Batya, perhaps because in his treatment of labour he had sought to keep ahead of trade union contracts and because of his immense export trade which the Government didn't wish to thwart. In 1935 no less than 2,107,720 workers were members of unions, and even as recalcitrant a man as Batya was obliged to allow the election of workers' councils who acted as spokesmen for the workers in the enforcement of conditions of work, sanitation and safety; of collective agreements, of any conflict between the individual worker and the employer or any of his managers.

In the event of trouble the Labour Courts supplemented the activities of the Councils. They existed everywhere, their word was law, and it was rigidly enforced. They listened to any real grievance of any worker in any trade, and never failed to bring an offending employer to terms. So far as I have been able to learn not one instance of bribery or any other form of venality had been uncovered in all the years of the existence of the Labour Courts.

The legal protection which the Czechoslovak Republic had extended to the man who had only his labour power to sell was hardly rivalled by any country in the world. Not only were hours of work regulated, collective bargaining encouraged and usually enforced, but health measures and safety devices were rigidly supervised. An employer could neither talk nor bribe his way to

immunity from labour laws. The worker enjoyed at least one week's holiday a year on full pay, sometimes more, and in the case of office employees often as long as four weeks. Domestic servants, porters, chambermaids, other hotel workers were covered by this law. If a man was out of work, he applied for a job to a government employment agency—no other agencies were permitted. The law protected a worker against arbitrary dismissal, against abuse of foreman and managers, against helplessness in time of a crisis either in his own life or in the life of the enterprise for which he worked.

Old Austria had inaugurated a widespread and competent system of social insurance. The Czechs had used it as the foundation of an all inclusive and far-sighted scheme of their own for the protection of wage earners. The workers were insured against unemployment, accident, sickness, old age and death. I do not care to clutter the book with descriptions of the highly technical and elaborate aspects of the Czechoslovak social insurance system. I only wish to emphasize that it covered every possible emergency and eventuality. The benefits were enjoyed not only by the wife and children but by grandchildren and parents. It included free medical service, free dental service, free consultation of a specialist.

The medical profession in Czechoslovakia was socialized in all but name. The goal of all young physicians and medical students was to receive an appointment with one of the insurance institutions. They had scanty prospect of earning a living from private practice, except if they attained the rank of a specialist.

I wish particularly to stress the benefits which employed working women derived from social insurance. When a girl married she received for her dowry the equivalent of a year's disability insurance. Czechoslovakia is a land of "dowries." Again and again and especially in the smaller communities I heard girls say there was small chance for them to marry "well," unless they could offer the man a dowry. Therefore every working girl if she was only insured, could hold her head high with the knowledge that when she met "the right man" she wouldn't become his wife empty-handed.

When an employed woman was with child she received benefits which no other western country had conferred on her.

For six weeks before and after birth she drew full insurance allowance, and for twelve weeks more than half of the full amount. She received free medical attendance and when necessary free hospital service. The medical care of the baby after birth was likewise free.

Out of approximately four and a half million wage earners, nearly three million were protected by social insurance. The others were in course of time to be made the beneficiaries of the law. There was in the pre-Munich days serious discussion of devising special forms of social insurance for the farmer and the small businessman. Of course the insured person shared equally with the employer the cost of the protection, which was based on the sum of his earnings, but never exceeding five per cent of that sum.

Child labour was banned except on the land and then parents were prevented from allowing chores or field work to interfere with school attendance. Young people under 16 and all girls under 18 were forbidden to do heavy industrial work. Mining and other dangerous occupations were closed to women workers.

In the legal protection of wage workers and salaried employees Czechoslovakia was one of the most advanced nations in the world.

The state not only laid down the principles which governed the relations between employer and worker, but through its manifold and widely-scattered enterprise it had become the foremost employer in the country. It operated the Railways, the Post Office, the Telegraph, the Telephone, the Radio, the Airline, the Tobacco Factories. It had taken over from Austria-Hungary a large network of mines—coal, silver, gold, lignite, salt, iron. It poured nearly half a billion crowns into reorganizing and modernizing them, and had so successfully managed them that they had begun to return a profit. It had gone into the hotel trade, in summer resorts and health spas, not so much to gain revenue as to provide for the population comfortable accommodation at low cost. It had under its control nearly three million acres of land mostly in timber, which through its 72 saw mills it successfully exploited as a business. It grew beets and converted them into sugar in its own factories. It ran breweries, distilleries, dairy farms, fisheries. It held a monopoly of hunting. Though its business interests were many not once had

it come face to face with serious cases of corruption or incompetence. Favouritism of course there was. Now and then the bureaucracy was rude and unaccommodating. But on the whole it had acquitted itself of its duties with honours. The state summer hotels and health spas were among the best in the land, the services lacking neither in competence nor in politeness. Here was a government that had made an astounding success of big and little business.

No other country in Europe had fostered so far-reaching and liberal an educational policy as Czechoslovakia. Other nations owing to the presence among them of racial minorities—Poland for example—and only to a lesser extent Jugoslavia, Rumania, Hungary and Germany—had a severe language problem on their hands. Covenants or no covenants, these nations had never shown any enthusiasm and sometimes—as in the case of Hungary—not even a desire to respect in their school curriculum the languages of subject peoples. To this day Hungary has not a single Slovak government school for its 141,882 Slovaks. But Czechoslovakia more than any nation in the world, except Russia, had accorded in her educational policy a place of honour to the language of all its minorities and of Slovakia.

I have already spoken of the vast network of elementary, middle, and higher schools, including a university, which the government had built for the Slovaks. For the Ruthenians, the other Slavic group in the nation, it had likewise built numerous schools. Under Hungary in the pre-Republic days three-fourths of the Ruthenian population was illiterate. Devoured by poverty, tuberculosis and other diseases, with but a small, more or less repressed intelligentsia to lament its sorrows and to proclaim its grievances to the outside world, it was of all Slav peoples the least articulate and least known even in Europe. With the coming of the Republic, education in the native tongue or tongues, allied with Russian and Ukrainian, at once became a movement of importance. In 1921-22 there were in the country only 530 schools with an attendance of 90,138 pupils, and in 1937-38 there were 800 schools with an attendance of 144,822 students. There were teachers' training schools, trade schools, business schools, and the beginning of a Ruthenian University in Prague.

Figures do not always tell a vivid or significant story. But in view of the age-old troubles and recriminations over racial minorities in Central Eastern Europe, the statistical picture of school life in Czechoslovakia among Germans, Hungarians and Poles, assumes more than mathematical significance. Let the figures then speak for themselves. They are for the year 1937.

*Germans:*

- 328 elementary schools, with 9208 classes and 8262 teachers.
- 447 upper elementary schools, with 2179 classes and 2117 teachers.
- 90 secondary schools.
- 108 technical schools.
- 3 colleges (1 University and 2 colleges of Technology), 3357 libraries.

*Magyars:*

- 841 elementary schools, with 2208 classes and 2196 teachers.
- 13 upper elementary schools, with 126 classes and 146 teachers.
- 8 secondary schools.
- 79 technical schools.
- 622 parish libraries.

*Poles:*

- 90 elementary schools, with 257 classes and 257 teachers.
- 11 upper elementary schools, with 68 classes and 80 teachers.
- 1 secondary school.
- 24 technical schools.
- 74 libraries.

"It must at the same time be emphasized," says an official publication, "that schools thus established not only employ the minority language as the language of instruction and have their textbooks in that language but they also have teachers who belong to the minority." Supervision over these schools is carried out by inspectors of the like nationality and (in Bohemia and Moravia-Silesia) the educational offices in every instance, except the Ministry, have nationality sections. This system of organization

thus applies practically to all Germans and all Poles. For Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia—where the Hungarians would be mainly affected—the introduction of this system is under consideration.

"The national minorities in Czechoslovakia are so equipped in the sphere of schools and cultural institutions that they are in no way worse off than their kinsmen in Germany, Hungary and Poland. This is shown by comparative figures. There is, for example:

1 German school in Czechoslovakia per 862 heads of German population.

1 German school in Prussia only for 1112 heads of German population.

1 Magyar school in Czechoslovakia per 810 heads of Magyar population.

1 Magyar school in Hungary only for 1191 heads of Magyar population.

1 Polish school in Czechoslovakia per 809 heads of Polish population.

1 Polish school in Poland only for 952 heads of population."

Even Jews were permitted to have schools of their own in the Hebrew language, and their middle school in Mukachevo was one of the best staffed and best equipped in the country.

No other nation except Russia had given such understanding to the linguistic needs and demands of its nationality groups as had Czechoslovakia. The law proclaimed that wherever the foreign group constituted one fifth of the population of the community, it was to have a school and a library of its own. Mistakes of course were made. Tactless functionaries again and again misinterpreted and disregarded the provisions of this law. But the Central Government never hesitated to rectify errors and transgressions. In Slovakia the minority rights of Hungarians were often ruthlessly brushed aside, but only because Czech or Slovak functionaries, perhaps out of revenge, perhaps out of a zeal for Slovakization, did not hesitate to flout the constitution of the country.

Czechoslovakia had made education the cornerstone of its

democracy, not only for racial minorities but for its own people—Slovaks and Czechs. The most ardent Slovak patriot in the pre-Republic days never had dreamed of such a rapid rise of a school system in his own tongue, from kindergarten to university. The Czechs themselves having lived under Austria and having acquired, during the Hussite rebellion, a love of learning in their own tongue, never permitted the Hapsburgs to impose on them a German system of education. They clung to their Czech language even as they clung to their faith in their national destiny. They had always fought illiteracy and insisted on their own schools. But with the coming of the Republic they co-ordinated, expanded, and revitalized their educational system with fresh ideas and fresh energies. Children's nurseries, kindergartens, elementary schools, gymnasiums, realkas, middle schools emphasized technical education and modern languages as a preparation for the study of engineering and allied professions; teachers' training schools, industrial schools, business schools, agricultural schools, foreign language schools, institutes for adults, and the old Czech University in Prague, founded in 1343, and one of the oldest in Europe—these make up the formidable array of educational institutions for the Czech population.

Nor was there ever a halt to expansion, particularly in accommodations for the very young—crèches and kindergartens. And these Czech schools weren't reserved exclusively for Czechs. Germans, Hungarians, Poles or others who wished to attend them, were welcomed on terms of equality with Czechs. The older of these schools, with their finely-trained staff of teachers, could easily hold their own in academic standing with the best in any country. In talking to seniors or graduates of the gymnasiums, I was astounded at their intellectual maturity and the range of their knowledge. Eighteen, nineteen, at most twenty years of age, they discoursed with understanding and appreciation on politics, on literature, on foreign countries. They were grown citizens in the fullest sense of the word.

With the rise of Henlein and the growing control of the German schools by his followers, the democratic spirit of education in ever-increasing areas in the Sudetenlands was blunted or outlawed. But in the other schools, particularly those in the Czech language, the

principles of democracy, tolerance, social justice in industry, in politics, in international relations, were as much a part of their studies as history or mathematics.

Co-operatives were another mighty pillar of Czechoslovakian democracy. They were not new in the country. The newly-risen industrialist in the town, the rapidly emerging middleman and the Czech peasantry, after the collapse of serfdom, had begun to band together to save themselves from victimization by the usurer; first into mutual credit and savings societies, and then into other forms of co-operatives, such as consumer, building and handiworker societies. With the arrival of the Republic the movement had swept the country, especially the peasantry. In 1935 there were in Czechoslovakia 11,454 Agricultural Associations and about half of them were Savings and Credit Societies. The others covered a wide range of peasant activity and peasant need—dairying, baking, distilling, sugar manufacturing, stock raising, drying of chicory, production of electric current, joint use of modern implements, growing of flax and hemp, weaving of linen, retail stores, and the maintenance of warehouses and cold-storage plants. Quickly the co-operatives became the backbone of the Agrarians, subsequently the most powerful and most reactionary political party in Czechoslovakia. Originally, under the old Austro-Hungarian regime, the Agrarians had been a revolutionary party, whose aim had been the distribution of the land among the landless and land-poor peasantry. With the realization of that programme under the Republic and the increasing prosperity of the farmer, especially the man with a substantial acreage, and the growing economic resources of the far-flung co-operative societies, the Agrarians became more and more wrapped up in policies and pursuits of immediate benefit to their own people, regardless of possible consequences to the other groups in the country. They fought the enactment of large-scale social services on the ground that it wasn't the government's affair to provide funds which come from taxpayers for the protection of industrial workers and other city dwellers. They envisaged the destiny of Czechoslovakia in terms mainly of its Agrarian progress and the prosperity of the Agrarian population, and chiefly of that part of the population possessing substantial acreages. The very Republic, which had

brought them those rewards for which in the old days they had been ready to shed their blood, they now wished to subordinate. But they reckoned without the influence and the power of the professors. While staunchly supporting the spread of co-operatives among the peasantry, they had, with the support of the progressive-minded political parties, fought off the intrigues and the schemes of the Agrarian leaders to mutilate and scrap their progressive programme.

The *Sokols* were a further expression of that progressive, humanitarian programme. Conceived in the desire for liberation from German repression, they had set out from the very beginning, under the guise of a physical culture society, to prepare themselves physically and spiritually for the impending struggle. Dr. Miroslav Tyrs, the founder, had from the start made his followers realize that because of their numerical inferiority to Germans they would need to achieve individual superiority over the German if they expected to triumph. Tyrs and his followers were neither dreamers nor fanatics. In spite of financial difficulties and the efforts of the Hapsburgs to thwart *Sokol* influence, the movement attracted an ever-increasing number of sympathizers. Legally they were only "gymnastic clubs." Finally in secret they became the centre of a movement of liberation. With the coming of the Republic they rose to be one of the defenders and promoters, not only of health and discipline, but of the democratic traditions which the Czech people had inherited from their ancestors. Hardly a community in Bohemia but had its *Sokol* organization. Those of us who witnessed the physical culture drills of the young and the old in Masaryk Stadium during the *Sokol* conference in the summer of 1938 will cherish it for ever as one of the most beautiful tributes to disciplined humanitarianism that we had ever known.

The Czech army was another mighty pillar of democracy. Of course the professors who had been nurturing the Republic were fiercely assailed by the Socialists, especially in Germany, for their collaboration with militarists. What did the proletarians, argued the Socialists, want with soldiers and generals who only knew how to kill proletarians at the behest of capitalists? But these professors were intellectuals with a virility and a far-sightedness which the

German Socialists and hardly any other intellectuals in any European land had ever manifested. They knew that however weak Germany might be in the early years of peace, she was too ambitious a nation to content herself with physical impotence and economic demoralization. At any rate they would not trust themselves to the mercy of a future Germany. So they proceeded to build up an army, but a Czech army—efficient, disciplined and true to the principles of the Republic. No man could enter an officer's school until he had finished his service in the ranks. He had to have undergone the discipline and trials of a recruit before he could be in a position of command. No class was favoured for officers. They would have no military caste in the country. The lieutenant, captain, colonel, general were brought up in a spirit of fellowship towards the ranks and the civilian population. The drills were strenuous. Obedience was imperative. But neither snobbishness nor exclusiveness was tolerated. The army like the *Sokol*, the co-operatives, the schools, the Parliament, was to be a part of the power, the discipline, the humanitarianism of the Republic. Not even the Nazi Germans in the heyday of their hostility to Czechoslovakia, and with all the scurrility and venom with which they had slobbered the Czechs and the Republic, ever had uttered a word of grievance against the manner in which Sudeten Germans were treated as soldiers in the Czechoslovak army. In Tabor, at the *Sokol* bathing beach on Sunday afternoon, there was always a crowd of soldiers from the Sudetenland. Rugged and cheerful and pleasant they had only words of praise for the soldierly ability and for the purely human character of the Czech officers under whom they served.

In Prague I had made the acquaintance of a young and brilliant Roman Catholic from Austria and his beautiful Czech wife. Both had fled from the Nazi terror, he because he had been active in the Catholic Youth movement, she because it would have been dangerous for her to remain in Vienna, even though she was a Czech citizen. Neither could find work in Czechoslovakia. But they had a place of safety. They had time to survey chances of accommodation elsewhere. Nor were they alone. Others, not only Catholics, had fled to Czechoslovakia for the safety of their lives.

A small country with a substantial number of her own able-bodied citizens out of work, there was little chance for many outsiders to make a permanent home in the Republic. But they were free there, and in no danger of being roused out of bed late in the night and hauled off to a concentration camp. They could make the acquaintance of any one they chose without jeopardizing their security. They were human beings again, their self-respect restored, their hopes revived.

That had always been so in Czechoslovakia. The Republic had maintained a tradition of open door to political fugitives. After the Russian Revolution several thousand Russian intellectuals sought asylum there. They were permitted to have their own schools and their own cultural life. Being Slavs and feeling a strong bond of spiritual kinship with the Czechs, especially with "the professors," they had in the twenty years of their sojourn become substantially amalgamated with the native population. With the collapse of the Bela Kun Bolshevik regime in Hungary and the coming of the White Terror, another wave of refugees flowed into Czechoslovakia and found accommodation there. From Poland came still another stream—Vitos, leader of the disaffected peasantry and his friends, and Nationalist Ukrainians who escaped from the floggings of the Polish police. After Dolfuss, the Austrian Chancellor, had turned his machine-guns on the Socialists, more refugees poured into Czechoslovakia. With the rise of Hitler a fresh tide swept over the border. Karl Kautsky, the eminent German Socialist, Otto Bauer, leader of the Austrian Socialists, Thomas Mann, the German writer and many other men of note had fled there.

With the fall of Austria and the terror that had erupted on the arrival of the Nazis, still more refugees flocked to Czechoslovakia. In the years of the Republic—that is in the pre-Munich days—Czechoslovakia never begrimed bread and shelter to fugitives from terror. There was no hatred of people because of race, religion, nationality or political persuasion. There were only understanding, tolerance and good will. The voices of protest against this show of generosity to outsiders were muffled in the burst of indignation which they had evoked. And no country in the world treated Jews with greater respect.

And so during the six days that I had been a captive of bad weather I had assembled my thoughts on the civilization of the country in which I had been travelling. My knowledge and experience were then more limited than now. It was obvious even then that, in spite of the errors and wrongs it had committed, the country had set out boldly to build a new civilization of a kind which, in terms of the privileges and comforts of the common man, Central Europe never had known. Here were freedom and humanitarianism and people who believed in both. Here were good books from the whole world—Czechs have a passion for literature—and any one could read them or own them without fear of molestation. Here above all were tolerance, modesty, abundance and peace. Here the word *professor* had assumed a meaning and a glory which it had hardly known in any other land.

At last the rain stopped. The musicians in the café began to show enthusiasm. The manager of the hotel, a young and cheerful Slovak, invited me to his table. Other guests had already assembled there—among them the ebullient house-physician, the manager's taciturn young brother from the Skoda works, a woman school teacher from Brno who was chaperoning two young girls, one from Prague and one from Brno, both of whom were chafing with impatience at the solicitude she continually bestowed on them. The musicians started a folk tune and the whole house burst into song, even the taciturn brother of the manager.

"We have beautiful songs in Slovakia," the manager whispered in my ear, and went back to singing. Without stopping, the musicians played song after song and the whole house—Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians—and especially the young people at the manager's table—accompanied the playing with full-throated and full-hearted singing. Then the musicians struck up Gounod's "Ave Maria." The audience sang with unlessered enthusiasm. Then followed a sonata by Grieg and another by Beethoven and the audience followed every measure with their voices as though the sonatas were only familiar folk tunes.

I listened with increasing enjoyment and with a fresh appreciation of the sheer humanity of these people. They had come from

many parts of the Republic and were of different nationalities, though predominantly Czech, and in this many-windowed and brightly-lighted café deep in the mountains of the lower Tatra, singing folk tunes and classical compositions, they seemed an epitome of the traits and the virtues of the whole nation. They were not reaching out from their middle-class position for extravagant rewards. In food, shelter, recreation, it was the simple things that counted. Nobody dressed for dinner; I doubt if any of them, men or women, were in possession of evening clothes. They played cards and chess; they talked and drank coffee and wine, though never to excess; they read newspapers, books, and now for almost an hour they had been singing melody after melody, with an enjoyment, an appreciation, a spirit of good fellowship that made the room and the whole resort a place of hallowed contentment.

Someone sent up a carafe of wine to the musicians and they laid away their instruments and refreshed themselves. Other guests ordered drinks—chiefly wine, and turning to me the manager said:

“Have you ever tasted hot wine?”

“I haven’t. I’ve only heard of it in Moravia. Peasants eat it with bread in winter.”

“You must taste it as we make it here—you never drank anything more delicious,” and hailing the waiter he explained at length how he wanted the wine prepared—what spices to use, how much sugar to put in and how long to keep it on the fire.

Only the school teacher was in no cheerful mood.

“I wish,” she said plaintively, “the orchestra would play something sad.”

“Are you unhappy?” I asked.

“I feel like crying—I am often like that when I hear music.”

“You’re sad,” broke in a young Slovak who had just joined our table, “because Hlinka is dead.”

“Hlinka!” she flung back reproachfully, “I’m not that kind of a Slovak,” and suddenly turning to the two girls whom she was chaperoning she said:

“We’d better go home. It’s late already.”

"Late," protested the girl from Prague. "The evening is just beginning!" Tall, plump with flashing dark eyes and with soft light-brown hair fluffed up like a bundle of freshly-husked flax, she was a picture of engaging indignation.

"Let them stay," pleaded the physician.

"Yes, let them stay," rose a cry from every one at the table.

"Think of it," said the girl turning to me, "I'm seventeen going on eighteen, yes eighteen, and I'm treated like a thief, really, as though I was going to steal something or smash a window," and she gave a loud but not an amusing laugh.

"Well, I have promised your mother, I'd take good care of you," said the school teacher in defence.

"My *maminka*!" said the girl ignoring the teacher. "She's impossible really—I adore her but she's so old-fashioned—she won't let me see anybody after dark—boys I mean—they cannot even come to the house—because I am only seventeen—and I can't go anywhere—and I love to go places—cafés—motion pictures—dances—concerts. Do American girls have to stay home after dark?"

"I haven't heard of any," I said.

"There now," she turned in triumph to her teacher. "In America girls like me have all the freedom they want, don't they?" she turned to me.

"Sure, of course, sweetheart mine," burst out the doctor in the few words of English an American patient had taught him.

"It's alright," went on the girl turning to me and lowering her voice, "I fool mother, and don't you think I don't—I have to—if I want any fun—and I know how to take care of myself—girls of my age aren't helpless—we know more than our *maminkas* think we do—really—and if they don't give us freedom—well—we'll take it in our own way—" She started to laugh and I joined her. Years ago while visiting a friend in a small town in Nebraska I heard a girl of the same age speak the same insurgent language against *maminka*.

"When you grow up and are the mother of a daughter like yourself you'll be no better than your mother," admonished the teacher. The girl laughed aloud and vigorously shook her head.

"Never, I give you my word."

"And now, darling, we had better go home," said the teacher softly, almost in supplication.

"I won't," protested the girl, "I just won't."

"It is eleven and your mother wants you to be sound asleep at eleven."

"But I am not in Prague—there are different rules here," argued the girl.

"There are no rules at all here," chimed in the doctor with a hearty laugh.

"There now!" threw out the girl in triumph.

The waiter brought us steaming wine and poured it into our glasses.

"We can't go now, can we?" said the girl, "we must drink the wine." The teacher made no answer.

The orchestra struck up "The Blue Danube." Leaping to his feet the doctor put his arm around the waist of the protesting girl and glided off with her to the dance floor. The teacher watched them with tightly-pressed lips and with eyes shiny with protest. To revive her good humour the manager reminded her of the glass of hot wine before her. With nervous eyes and smiling but not with joy she lifted her glass to her lips and said cheerlessly:

"Na zdar!"

"Na zdar, na zdar!" echoed the manager so loudly that the girl from the dance floor flashed her eyes on us and shouted with glee, "Na zdar!" and the doctor likewise shouted "Na zdar!" and with beaming faces they continued to whirl wildly around the floor.

## Chapter IX

### THE GATHERING CLOUDS

TRAVELLING in Czech towns and villages had lulled me into a state of complacency. The calm of the country, the absorption of people in their daily task, the uninterrupted traffic on highways, and railways, the crowds in the cafés and dance halls, the processions of promenaders after work hours in parks and on the main streets of cities, the endless stream of vacationists with packs on their backs and sticks in their hands, on their way to or from mountain resorts; all this made the political conflicts of the moment seem void of explosive energy and of immediate danger. Czechs talked of the Runciman Mission with a deep but quiet distrust. Not a soul would believe that Prague had "requested" the lord to come, and because the British Prime Minister had said so, distrust of him and of the British Government was deepening. But nobody was excited. Nobody showed acrimony. Nobody indulged in denunciation or vituperation, not even against Hitler, Goebbels or the German press. People cherished faith in themselves, in the wisdom of Benes, in the impregnability of their democracy, in the might of their army. They couldn't imagine themselves defeated diplomatically or militarily.

This universal tranquillity and self-confidence had communicated itself to me, and I was under the conviction that nothing violent or subversive was threatening. Czechoslovakia was too orderly, too industrious, too progressive, too enlightened, too powerful, too useful a nation to all mankind to be coaxed, bullied or smashed into submission.

True, the Hlinka Slovaks spoke with bitterness of the Czechs. But this was a family feud. The Hlinka intellectuals were too impetuous to appreciate the slowness with which historical processes achieved consummation, and Czechs, in spite of the violent language of the Hlinka followers, showed no ill-temper towards them, neither in Prague, nor in cafés, nor in the streets. On the

contrary, they patronized Slovak cellars, sang Slovak songs, tuned in on Slovak broadcasts, wandered off for vacations to Slovak villages, and had invested the word Slovak with something vivid and joyous, something that had gone out of their souls and which they wished to recapture and glorify.

Then I arrived in Tatratska Lumnitsa—one of the leading summer resorts. I had gone there to visit the summer-school in international politics which had just opened. More than 250 delegates had come from many parts of the world, chiefly from England. There must have been about 100 English—mostly young people. They had gathered for serious discussion of the problems that were rocking Europe. The perplexity and anxiety among them were in marked contrast to the calm and the self-confidence that prevailed in the rest of the country.

The subject of minorities, especially in Czechoslovakia, was discussed with particular earnestness. Could the problem be settled without war?

To me from all that I had read, heard and observed, the very emphasis which the word minority was receiving in this summer-school, in the world press, and particularly in the chancelleries of Europe, was an evasion of the real source of the commotion in Central Europe. Of course there were minorities in Czechoslovakia, with grievances against Prague, because of blunders it had committed. That much Prague itself admitted. Czechoslovakia was no Switzerland—not yet. But then Switzerland had had five centuries in which to achieve inner unity, and the Czechoslovak Republic had been functioning for only twenty years.

Yet by comparison with other nations in Central Europe, especially with those that were shouting most loudly of minority wrongs in Czechoslovakia—Poland, Hungary, Germany—the condition of the minority groups under the Prague Government was a triumph. To place a Czech without a knowledge of German in charge of a railway ticket office in a community that spoke only German, was more than an error. To send a young Czech ignorant of the German language as mail carrier or post master to a wholly German village, was certainly tactless. To award a contract for cement or timber to a Czech firm because it was Czech was reprehensible. Incidents like these happened only too often in Czechoslovakia.

slovakia. Nor had the Czechs in positions of high authority denied these miscarriages of constitutional intent. They laid it chiefly to lack, as yet, of competent personnel in positions of responsibility.

But what were such instances of discrimination by comparison with the brutal repressions of foreign groups in Italy, Poland, Jugoslavia, Rumania, Germany, Hungary? Had Hitler been consumed with a real passion for retrieving the wrongs of German minorities he would have turned his wrath and his vengeance first and foremost on Italy and on Mussolini.

No German minority anywhere endures the contumely and the degradation which are visited on the Germans in the Italian Tyrol. Though she had assumed no legal obligations at the Peace Conference to honour the rights of minorities in her midst, Italy had quite officially committed herself to a moral obligation to do so. On September 17th, 1919, in a speech in Parliament to the representatives of Italian minorities, M. Titoni, Italy's delegate to the Versailles Conference, had assured the world that his country had no intention of saddling them with any repressive measures, above all she would respect their lingual and cultural aspirations. On December 1st, 1919, in a speech from the throne, King Emmanuel made a similar declaration and stated specifically that his country would honour the local institutions of alien peoples. In 1922 in accepting, as did other members of the League of Nations, the resolution of that body favouring a liberal policy towards minorities, Italy went on record for the third time and most officially as a champion of minority rights. Yet under Mussolini not a vestige has remained of what little respect Italy had originally shown for the fulfilment of her widely proclaimed and self-imposed moral obligations. Neither the Germans in the Southern Tyrol of whom there are 257,000 nor the Littoral Slovenes and Croats of whom there are 525,000 have had parliamentary representation since the coming of Mussolini and his Fascist regime. Mayors and secretaries in the minority regions have been exclusively Italians.

Of the language rights of minorities not a shadow has remained. Hardly an institution in these districts but has undergone a drastic process of Italianization. In all contact with authority Germans, like Slavs, are obliged to use only the Italian language regardless

of whether the contact is verbal or written. If they don't know the Italian language so much the worse for them. Local names have had to be Italianized. Epitaphs on tombstones have had to be inscribed in the Italian tongue. Since 1926 Italian has supplanted German as the language of education in Southern Tyrol, and the German teachers have been replaced by Italians. Even private teaching of German and other minority languages has been forbidden. In religious instruction the native tongue has been banned and may be used only in the actual conduct of services. Priests who have violated this demand, have been unceremoniously expelled.

Foreign journalists who have travelled in the Southern Tyrol tell amusing stories of waiters in hotels furnishing the visitor with an Italian menu and secretly smuggling over one in the German language, or of first pretending not to know any language but Italian, then remembering their German the moment they were sure the client was no agent of the Italian Government. Not since the days of Czarist Russia and Hapsburg Hungary has any country in Europe been seeking so cruelly to denationalize its acquired minorities as has Italy. Yet not a word of protest or remonstrance has come from Hitler, Goebbels or the German broadcasters. They don't mind the barbarities imposed on their kinsmen in Italy.

And Germany herself since the ascension of Hitler to power, has gladly violated the rights of minorities. I am not speaking now of the Jews. The deliberate and unceasing attempt to exterminate them has been too widely publicized to be spoken of here. After the Peace Conference, on receiving assurance of international protection of the minority rights of her nationals in other lands, Germany committed herself to the respect of such rights within her own borders. With the coming of Hitler, independent representations of minorities in Parliament have been swept away. Consider, for example, the case of the Poles. Official German figures give the numbers of Poles in Germany as 700,000. The Poles estimate the number at 1,200,000. Yet of the 260,000 Polish children of school age, only 1636 are attending Polish schools. Of the 110,000 Polish children under school age no more than 435 are enjoying the benefits of kindergartens in their own language. The

Polks in Germany have only one secondary school, in Bytom, and had it not been for Polish threats to shut German schools in Poland, this school would have long ago ceased to function as a Polish school. The Lusatian Serbs of whom there are about 160,000 in Germany have not a single elementary school in their own language.

Some of their schools are bilingual though in Prussia Serbs must attend German schools. The Nazis have disbanded the Serb physical culture societies and the Serb press, and have insisted on a conversion of the "Domovina," the one Serb cultural society, into a "Union of German-Speaking Lusatian Serbs." Quite openly the Nazi Germanizers are proclaiming that these Serbs are a part of the German nation and must therefore identify themselves in language with the German people. Here is an example of forcible denationalization by the one nation in Europe which has made the minority issue an explosive powder barrel. Only the small Danish minority in Slesvig has been permitted to have its own schools—this as an act of reciprocity with Denmark which permits on its territory the functioning of German schools. Neither the Czechs nor the Lithuanians, nor the Friesians, in Germany have had any educational institutions in their own tongue.

Consider now the case of Hungary. In the old days only Czarist Russia could compare with her in the venality and brutality with which she had sought to suppress and Magyarize her minorities. In Turcansky Svatymartin the Slovaks told me that it took them seven years to obtain permission from the Hungarian officials to build a pavement in their town. The suppression of education in Slovak and Ruthenian languages is too well known to be spoken of here, and let it be remembered that in 1912 Tisa, the Hungarian Prime Minister, had announced in Parliament that there were no more Slovaks in Hungary and no longer a Slovak problem.

The defeat of Hungary in the World War and the agony that followed it has brought no change of heart. In spite of her signature to the Treaty of Trianon guaranteeing minority rights to racial or national groups, she has persisted in her century-old practice of compelling groups within her midst to denationalize themselves. The theory of "a single and indivisible Magyar nation," embodied in a law passed in 1868 has never lost its sway over the

minds of the Hungarian rulers. The national minorities now, as formerly, have no political representation and no independent political existence. An American journalist, on being given a letter of introduction to a Slovak Lutheran pastor in Hungary, was warned to be wary of spies and not to call on the man more than once or he would be subject to unpleasant consequences. This pastor was a Slovak nationalist and the Hungarians wouldn't permit him openly to express his grievances to a foreign journalist. The Slovaks in Hungary have no schools in their own language. At best Slovaks may have their language taught side by side with the Hungarian language. Hungary has not a single teachers' training school for any of her minorities. Hence even the Germans must content themselves with only ten per cent of their children attending purely German schools. The Germans are permitted to operate their Cultural Union but only if in return they elect as leaders supporters of the Hungarian regime.

The Slovak Provincial Cultural Union has been largely an instrument of Magyarization. The Evangelical *Hlasník*, a Slovak monthly publication and the *Slovenske Noviny*, a weekly in Budapest, were the only Slovak journals in the country and their editors needed to be on guard in their pronouncements on the destiny of Slovak nationalism in Hungary. Search as diligently as one might, one could discover no act of grace on the part of the Hungarian government towards racial minorities, nor the least vestige of regard for the obligation it had assumed under its signature.

Consider how different had been the treatment of Hungarians in Czechoslovakia. They had benefited from the land reform, in acreage not as much as Slovaks, because in the old days they had been settled in the fertile valleys while the Slovaks had been largely driven into the barren mountainsides. They had derived profit from the grain monopoly of the government. They had received instruction in agriculture, which their own government in the old days had never given them—not even how to conserve manure from deterioration. They had more schools per 1000 population in their own language than had their racial kinsmen in Hungary. They operated their own cultural societies and they could write and speak and advocate to their soul's content any theory they

chose of their national destiny within the territories of Czechoslovakia. They had their own press, as many periodical and daily journals as there were Hungarian editors who cared to print them and keep themselves financially solvent. Now and then through the sheer stupidity of an official they were denied a school which they should have had. But these instances were exceptional; Hungarians themselves admitted as much. Their representatives could address Parliament in their own language. They could hold public office, though because of their refusal to co-operate politically in the early years of the Republic and the mistrust that this behaviour had aroused, they had not achieved proportionate representation in governmental institutions. Thomas Masaryk, then President of the Republic, had contributed one million crowns towards founding a Hungarian Cultural Society in Czechoslovakia, a much larger sum than he had given to the Slovak Matitsa in Turcansky Svatymartin. In 1937 at Komarno on the Danube, then part of Czechoslovakia, a statue was unveiled to Jokay, an eminent Hungarian novelist, and Milam Hodja, then Prime Minister, had made a generous contribution to the project and on the day of the unveiling had journeyed to Komarno to deliver in the Hungarian language an address in praise of Jokay and Hungarian culture!

There is no need to examine further the treatment of minorities outside of Czechoslovakia. The floggings of Nationalist Ukraniens in Poland and the demolition of Russian churches there are events of too recent occurrence to need full elaboration here, and testify clearly to Poland's frequent excursions into brutality as a method of disciplining zealous champions of nationalist rights, which at the Peace Conference she had vowed to honour.

In the last analysis there is no comparison between the treatment of minorities in Czechoslovakia and in other countries of Central Europe.

In spite of errors and misdeeds, the Czechoslovak policy of liberalism was something new and bright with promise in that age-old cauldron of inter-racial quarrels and wars. I have already written at length of the far-flung school system Czechoslovakia had opened for minority groups. Equally important was the chain of libraries she had sponsored for them. Any minority might use

its own language in the national Parliament in Prague. Any minority had the right to pursue its own cultural life in its own way, through cultural societies, amateur theatricals, physical culture movements, literary or other forms of association. Though she had not become a second Switzerland, which her delegation at the Peace Conference had said she would follow as a model "*le régime serait semblable à celui de la Suisse*," with due recognition to "the special conditions of Bohemia," she had introduced the universal franchise and proportional representation, universal education in the native tongue, freedom of religious worship, freedom of speech and assembly for all, the right to public office. In all these respects she had followed closely the Swiss model, and Switzerland had had five centuries in which to achieve her integration whereas the Czechoslovak Republic had been alive only twenty years.

According to the figures of 1930 there were in Czechoslovakia including the so-called "pockets" in Bohemia, Slovakia, Ruthenia, 3,231,688 Germans. They had their own University and two colleges of technology. In no other land in the world with the exception of Russia did or does a minority enjoy the privileges of an educational institution of university rank.

Already the law had provided for the establishment also of a German Academy of Science and Art. From a previous survey of their elementary and middle schools the reader has already learned how amply the German population was provided with them. They had 3500 German libraries and more were in the process of being built. They sponsored 177 institutions of popular education, which were apart from the regularly established schools. They maintained their own broadcasting station. In 1935 they published 63 daily newspapers, 142 political journals and numerous non-political magazines. Their cultural federation had flung itself all over the German-speaking communities with 3500 local associations. Out of 300 deputies in Parliament 72 were Germans; out of 150 in the Senate 37 were Germans. Until recently out of 17 members in the Cabinet 3 had been Germans, though for 8½ years in the beginning of the Republic they had spurned such office. Only after the annexation by Nazi Germany of Austria did they withdraw from the Cabinet.

Though they made up about 23 per cent of the population they commanded in the judiciary, among judges, magistrates, prosecuting attorneys, 22.6 per cent of the offices, in the department of health and in the clergy 25 per cent of the jobs. In the railway administration, in the Post Office and Telegraph, in the Government financial institutions, they had been at a disadvantage. They had not received the proportionate share of salaried positions, and their complaints on that score had more than verbal justification. Yet, it is well to remember that like the Hungarians, the Germans had in the early years of the Republic spurned offers of public office. It was beneath their dignity to work under Czechs and Slovaks. For hundreds of years they had been masters of the country, and now they were called upon to be servants. They expected the Republic to tumble into ruins and they nourished the hope that their absence from the services would only hasten the moment of collapse.

Their hopes never materialized. Like a well-nourished plant the Republic grew and strengthened. The Czechoslovaks, notably the Czechs, surprised them with their energy and their ability. They rose superbly to the fresh responsibilities they had assumed in every department of human experience. It was only then that Germans and Hungarians started to clamour for proportionate representation in the salaried positions of the Government, and the clamour was difficult to satisfy because many of the offices were already filled, and besides the Republic could take no chances, with applicants of whose loyalty it wasn't certain. The urge of national self-preservation demanded caution.

But the Sudeten Germans had always been an organic part of Bohemia, politically and economically, no less than geographically. Never had they been a part of Germany. There were in Czechoslovakia over three million Germans as against ten million Czechoslovaks. It was a question of either the one or the other sacrificing its complete independence. With the Czechs in supreme authority the Germans enjoyed the advantages of minority rights, if not to the extent to which they felt they were entitled, still in a large enough measure to enable them to pursue their common destiny un thwarted by efforts at forcible denationalization or economic segregation. But with the Germans becoming a part of

the Reich the 10 million Czechoslovaks had no guarantee of an independent existence. With their natural frontiers separated from their lands, their first lines of fortifications would go, would be in the hands of the enemy; sources of raw materials would be cut off, economic life would be mutilated, political freedom and the vast array of democratic institutions in which it had expressed itself, would be at the mercy of a power that scorned all forms of democracy. In the last analysis then it was a question of the rights of three million people against the rights of ten million people . . . Both groups couldn't be in supreme authority. Three million people continually deriving support from a powerful Reich could, when necessary, exert direct and indirect pressure on the other ten million. But the ten million with no backing from anybody would be helpless against an aggressive union of 80 millions! That was how judicial-minded Czechoslovaks viewed the problem in its theoretical aspects.

Considering the vast advantages which the Germans had been enjoying in Czechoslovakia it was almost absurd to speak of the quarrel between her and the Reich as a question of minority rights. If Hitler had been troubled by the repressions of German groups in foreign lands he would have launched his attack first and foremost on the country that was openly and ruthlessly suppressing its German minority, namely Italy, which I must repeat wouldn't allow epitaphs on tombstones to be inscribed in the German tongue.

The cry of minority rights was only an excuse for something else, infinitely more far reaching, namely power politics. "To think of our quarrel with Germany in terms of minority rights," said a Czech historian, "isn't even putting the cart before the horse. It is forgetting there ever was a horse."

Czechoslovakia was in the path of Germany's expansionist programme. Here was a robust Republic with enormous faith in her democracy and in her democratic destiny. She rose like a steel wall against the spread of totalitarianism within her own borders and even without. She wouldn't even join in the especially popular pastime of the totalitarian states, anti-semitism. She would listen to no proposals of advantage at the expense of her democracy. In her economic development she had become a real and ever growing power in Europe. With her singular competence in industry,

in agriculture, in finance, in salesmanship, in education, in administration, she was threatening to be more than a competitor of German industry. She had been paying her bills to outside creditors, always on time. She had balanced her budget. She had maintained a stable currency. She could command all the credit she cared to receive in the outside world. With buoyant self confidence she had been reaching out far and wide for markets. Batya had gone to all the corners of the world with his shoes and he hoped in time to sell other products to the people who were already buying his shoes. Skoda was known all over the world and so was Pilsen beer. More, this little land of Slavs, always merely a pawn in the hands of power politics, and in subjection to a German nation, was actually dreaming of the time when through internal economic development she could provide a comfortable standard of living for 40 million people, a population almost as large as that of France. If 15 million could show so much defiance, 40 million would be utterly unmanageable!

Above everything else Czechoslovakia had a strong military machine, all the more menacing because of the alliance she had concluded with Russia and France. With her industrial competence, her financial strength, her superb armament industry, with patents for weapons which no other country possessed, with an army including the reserves of two million men, with the natural mountain frontiers in the rim of her territories, with the network of Maginot lines within these frontiers and farther back, with all these elements of strength at her disposal, Czechoslovakia was not only a political and economic but military hindrance to Hitler's passionately proclaimed *Drang nach Osten*.

To the Czech the real reason for Nazi Germany's concentrated and desperate attack on his country was its political, economic and military strength. Not a Czech I had met but viewed the conflict between his country and Germany not in terms of minority rights, which could always be compromised and settled to every one's advantage, but of power politics. To me, neither the logic nor the humanity of this attitude was subject to dispute, and because the people in Czechoslovakia had universally shared it, not as a theory but as an axiom in international politics, they had resolved to thwart any efforts to break up their geographical

integrity. Once this was broken, the structure of the rest of the Republic couldn't possibly be held together.

The more I had travelled in the country, the deeper was my conviction that whatever happened the people would resist with success all of Hitler's efforts to smash their integrity—unless they were deserted by their friends, and especially by England. After all England was the dominant power in Europe, and she had now manœuvred herself into a position of command of Czechoslovakia's foreign policy. This had become clear to me after only a brief stay in Tatratska Lumnitsa. With the coming of Runciman, Prague's authority in decisions pertaining to Czechoslovakia's relations with Germany had passed from Benes to the Prime Minister in London, not nominally but effectually. It was this circumstance that had made so many of the delegates in the summer school and especially the British, concerned over the fate of Czechoslovakia. The Czechs incidentally showed less anxiety than the British, because they had unbounded faith in their moral and military invincibility.

What further deepened the anxiety of the delegate over Czechoslovakia's fate was the manner in which Lord Runciman had been handling the conflict. He was viewing it, not as did the Czechs, as a problem in power politics and Hitler's desperate aim to shatter the wall of resistance to his ambitious plans, but as a question of minority rights. Nor did he evince the least change of attitude with the passing of time and with the growing mass of evidence as to the falsity of his approach. Henlein had rejected plan after plan which the Czechs had proposed, and whenever this happened Lord Runciman pressed not Henlein but the Czechs for further concessions. Backed by Hitler, Henlein raised his demands with every concession that Lord Runciman had wrung from the Czechs. Obviously Henlein was playing for time and, with the aid of the Runciman mission, was drawing Czechoslovakia into an increasingly compromising position of danger and difficulty. Even when it became obvious that Henlein was deliberately sabotaging the negotiations, Lord Runciman persisted in pushing Prague closer and closer to the precipice. Lord Runciman's behaviour in Prague and the Prime Minister's behaviour in London had demonstrated that official England was not even dealing with the real problem,

which was power-politics, but with its shadow, which at the moment was minority rights.

The assemblage wasn't all discussion of politics and premonition of disaster. It was also a spectacle of human adjustment and human adjudication. Here in the heart of the Tatras in the comfortable but not luxurious government hotels, with towering mountains and dense forest as if to protect them from the intrusion of the outside world, had gathered a choice assemblage of young people. They had come from many lands, England, America, France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, and from many parts of Czechoslovakia. There was one delegate from the Reich, from the city of Leipzig. It was demonstratively a gathering made up of intelligentsia, college students and college graduates with positions of responsibility in journalism, in politics, in the professions, in government.

The Slavs had roused the envy of the others with their language achievements; especially was this true of the Czechs and the Slovaks. One handsome Slovak, a recent college graduate, carried on in my presence a conversation in English, Slovak, French, and German. Modest and gracious, he blushed slightly when I complimented him on his proficiency in so many languages, for he also spoke Yugoslav and Czech and understood Russian. A Russian girl from Ruthenia, as handsome as she was modest, with large brown eyes, a clear complexion, wavy light-brown hair, and a poise that wooed and defied friendliness, could converse in almost any language in which she was addressed. Her father was a Ruthenian, her mother a Hungarian, and all her life she had been living in a world of international and inter-racial relationships.

"I didn't learn languages," she said. "I grew up in them."

Thrown into close contact with one another, the delegates got easily acquainted and broke up into groups, went walking, drank cocktails and danced and laughed and flirted and made themselves ludicrous and unheroic and pleasant and exciting, as people always do when circumstances band them together in an out-of-the-way place in Czechoslovakia or anywhere else.

The three Italian delegates, young men, all Fascists, were the

best-groomed in the assemblage. They attended few lectures and participated in no public discussions, and unless drawn into it in private conversation, they preferred silence to an exchange of views. Cheerful and friendly, they were always ready for a song and a frolic, especially when the Polish girls were around. No other delegates seemed so carefree as they or so playful. Late in the night or early in the morning, as long as people wanted to sit up and drink wine and sing and amuse themselves, they were ready to do likewise. Sleep mattered as little to them as serious discussion on any of the problems which were troubling the other delegates. One of them strove heroically with his monocle, which kept falling down every time he turned his head or laughed. Especially was he determined to have it in place when he talked to a girl, and some girls deliberately sat beside him to enjoy the fun of his continual struggle with the recalcitrant piece of glass.

One afternoon I said to him :

"What are these reports about your bad harvests this year?"

"Lies of the democratic press," he answered.

"So you have plenty of food?"

"We have plenty of everything, for years and years."

"But if you went to war?" asked an English correspondent.

"We'd win," he snapped out, and as he did so, his monocle slipped into his lap and when he had fitted it into place again he looked up with an expression of triumph.

"I don't believe you'd have food enough to last you long if you went to war. Our fleet would cut you off from outside supplies," said the Englishman.

"You've been reading the democratic press," flung out the Italian with defiance.

"And what press have you been reading?"

"The only press that tells the truth—the Fascist press."

"Really?"

"Of course," and turning to me, he said, "Are you English?"

"No, he is an American journalist," answered my colleague.

"A democrat, I suppose?"

"Yes, I believe in democracy," I said.

"Democratic journalists always tell lies about us."

"I plead not guilty," I said. "I've never been in your country and haven't written a line about it."

"If you ever come to Italy and write about us, you'll be like the rest of them, a slave of the democratic press." Suddenly I heard a loud yawn and turning I saw Professor N——, a Czech, who had been sitting close by and listening to the conversation. In spite of his yawn, the professor looked neither weary nor bored and with his eyes and his manner he seemed as if urging us to go on with the argument. But our group broke up.

"You should have gone on talking to that handsome young man," said the professor. "It was a remarkable conversation. I had been introduced to him in the morning and had sat with him at the same table during lunch."

"The monocle was in the way," I replied.

"It was very instructive, listening to the Italian—very instructive. His words bear out my theory about our present epoch in history. I'd like to tell you about it later."

In the evening there was a dance. I sat with a group of English people and in the party was a dark-haired Hungarian girl with a broad mouth, a thick underlip and brilliant blue eyes. She had come to the Tatra with her father for a vacation and now that he had left she was alone and had come to attend the summer school. She asked if any of us were planning soon to be in Budapest and to those who said that they were, she gave her card and said in perfect English :

"Please look me up when you get there."

"I say," said one Englishman, "why do you invite so many people to come to see you?"

"Oh, I like people to look me up in my home."

"If they all come to Budapest and call on you, I won't have a chance to be with you a single evening."

"Of course not."

"What? But you've said you'd go out with me?"

"Not in the evening—I never go out with a man in the evening."

"And you live in Budapest—the Paris of Central Europe!"

"Yes, of course, Budapest is my home. It's a beautiful city."

"And the girls are pretty and friendly?"

"Of course, of course. But there are two kinds of girls in Budapest, those who go out evenings and those who don't."

"And you don't?"

"I can't. You see it's like this—if I am seen with a man in the evening I am talked about, and that's bad for me, very bad—spoils my chances of getting married to the right man." We laughed—the frankness of the girl was as amusing as the information she had given us.

"As bad as that?" someone interjected.

"Yes, as bad as that. No man in my class would have me for a wife."

"I guess Budapest isn't the city I thought it was."

"But it's such a beautiful city and you must come there, all of you."

"And call on you—only in the day time?"

"That's right, only in the day time."

"And go with the other girls in the evening?"

She nodded.

"And you wouldn't care?"

"Of course not. Why should I care?" Again there was laughter and presently the orchestra struck up a tune and a Rumanian came over and invited the Hungarian girl to dance. Excusing herself she arose and started dancing and from the distance we saw her present to her partner a visiting card!

Then the professor came over to me.

"Well, shall we go for a walk?" he said.

We went outdoors and started on a winding road which led deep into the mountains.

"Now tell me about your theory of the history of our epoch," I said.

The professor was a man of about fifty, thickset, with a large head and a slow deliberate manner of speech. He spoke excellent English.

"You see," he began, "it is possible, as the Marxists say, to interpret history in terms of class-struggle, only I don't accept their arbitrary division of society into masters and serfs, capitalists and proletarians. That is too simple and too forced. Of course, there is always a ruling class. We've had the slaveholder, the feudal lord,

the bourgeoisie, and now," he paused an instant and with emphasis on every syllable he added, "and now we have the petty intellectual." He again paused as though to allow his words to sink into my mind. I said nothing. I waited for further elucidation. "Yes," he went on, "this is the age of the petty intellectual. He is the real hero or villain of our times, whether you are with him in this moment of his triumph in certain parts of the world, or against him. Is this new to you?" he asked.

"Rather," I answered.

"I may be wrong, but it's well that people who believe in democracy should ponder on the matter. Now take the young Italian with the uncontrollable monocle; he's a perfect example of what I mean. He's self-confident, bumptious, rude, superior, only in his case, because he has a certain amount of charm, his manner wasn't as offensive as it might be. D'you remember he had only one answer for every question you asked? Fascism to him is the one right, the one truth, the one finality, and democracy the one wrong and the one lie. Now ordinarily a man like that, I mean the petty intellectual, in a democracy makes an excellent teacher, policeman, book-keeper, or factory foreman. He has energy, honesty, dependability. He makes a splendid corporal and even a first lieutenant in any enterprise. He's the backbone of our civil service in Czechoslovakia, for example, I mean in the subordinate positions. But under Fascism he becomes the spy, the tormentor, the agent provocateur, the shouter of slogans, the initiator of demonstrations, the carrier, in other words, of the burden of the dirty work of his superiors. He does it all the more readily because Fascism offers him compensations which he had perhaps never known—it gives him a salary, responsibility, power, a uniform, adventure, battle, indeed it singles him out for special attention, and he comes to think of himself as a man of destiny. He is patronizing to the people who had been below him, that is to the proletarian, but he is hostile to the people who had been above him, that is to aristocrats and to capitalists.

"That's why I am convinced that Fascism is in its way a weapon of death to capitalism. Greater than Bolshevism, because the Russians haven't the drive and the competence of the Germans. The petty intellectual hates everything he couldn't attain in a non-

Fascist society. He would like to smash capitalism so that he would have absolutely nobody except his immediate Fuehrer over him, and pettiness is his chief characteristic—in intelligence, in character, in vision, in humanity, in everything but impudence and barbarity." Again the professor paused and for a long interval we walked on in the dark, the mountains on either side of us, the silence of the night giving added meaning to the words to which I had been listening. I waited for him to go on with his discourse, but he remained silent.

"Go on, Professor," I urged.

"I've finished," he answered. I pressed for no further explanations and we walked on in silence. At last the climbing got so steep that we started panting, so we turned back to the hotel. On our way home we spoke little. Perhaps the professor had intended to remain silent so that I would give all my thoughts to his pronouncement. If so, he accomplished his purpose, for the words "the age of the petty intellectual" rang in my ears.

"What d'you think of my theory?" he finally asked.

"I'm still thinking," I answered.

"Write about it and make other people think of it—the position of the petty intellectual is, in my judgment, the most momentous issue before mankind. It isn't the proletarian, but the petty intellectual who is the real henchman and tyrant in our modern world, dangerous to the proletarian but even more so to the real intellectual and to the capitalist, to any one superior to him." After another pause he spoke again. "It isn't the farm and the factory but the university that's breeding the enemy of mankind. Yes, it is the middle school and the university," he repeated gravely and once more lapsed into silence.

We reached the hotel. The professor excused himself and went to his room and I went down to the café. The orchestra was playing and couples were dancing. The Italian youth with the monocle, which he now held in his hand, was engaged in an animated conversation with a Polish girl. I joined the small group of British delegates with whom I had been sitting. The Hungarian girl was still at their table, slightly flushed, perhaps with wine, perhaps only with excitement, and as talkative and good-humoured as when I had last seen her.

"Are you coming to Budapest?" she asked, turning to me.

"Of course I am," I replied and there was an outburst of laughter.

"We must organize a club," said one man, "the date-in-the-daytime Budapest club."

The girl laughed gaily and others joined her and I made an effort to be merry. But it was an unsuccessful effort. The phrase "the age of the petty intellectual" was burning itself in my mind.

The next morning I left the Tatratska Lumnitsa and went wandering again, this time in Ruthenia.

## Chapter X

### RUTHENIA

A HUNGARIAN journalist in Koshitse with a hearty contempt for Slavs, especially Ruthenians, said as he was seeing me off on the train :

"When you get to Ruthenia you'll find there six nationalities, ten languages, fourteen religions."

"You can't discourage me," I said, "because I've always liked Slavs."

"And you'll also find," he went on gloatingly, "that the Ruthenians have only one occupation—scrapping with one another."

I had not been in Ruthenia more than a day when I discovered that there was more than contempt in the words of the Hungarian journalist. His mathematical calculation of the subdivisions of the people was not an exaggeration but an underestimation. There were at least eleven nationalities in Ruthenia, as many languages, and as for religion, I heard of one village with a population of only 3382 souls and with 33 denominations. Of course this village was overpowered by an especial passion for religion, and was somewhat exceptional even among the God-seeking Ruthenian peasantry.

More than any other part of Czechoslovakia, Ruthenia was a conglomeration of nationalities and religions. In the window of a bookshop in Mukischevo I saw school books in German, Hungarian, Ruthenian, Hebrew, Russian and Ukrainian! For the first time I appreciated the sheer expense to a nation of maintaining school buildings, teaching staffs, janitor service, in minority languages. Yet Czechoslovakia was doing it with no word of complaint.

There were in Ruthenia Russians, Ukrainians, Ruthenians, Germans, Yugoslavs, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Gipsies, Jews and some 300 persons of unclassified nationalities. They professed in the main eight denominations, seven Christian and one Jewish. But scattered through the country were many little congregations that espoused cults of their own, and a village by the name of Vulok seemed the home of most of them. Yet Ruthenians composed the

bulk of the population. In 1930 out of 725,357 souls, 450,925 or more than one-half were Ruthenians, nearly all peasants, the most backward not only in Czechoslovakia but, as far as I could estimate, in the whole of the far-flung Slav world. While travelling in Ruthenian villages I was reminded again and again of the word "idiocy" which Russian writers in their angry laments over the Russian peasantry in the old days were continually using. Here was "idiocy" in its ugliest form—horrible roads—fetid homes, foul barns and stables, wretched food, inebriety in everything, it seemed, but the pretty blue eyes of the people, their melodious voices, their readiness to weep and, of course, in the extraordinarily beautiful scenery of the country.

"You know," said a Slovak professor to me, "I am a director in a sawmill in Ruthenia and we've done everything we could to keep the men from spending their money on *polenka*, but we just don't know how. On pay day not only their wives and mothers but the devil himself couldn't hold them from rushing off to the inn." I knew this professor. He was one of the most brilliant minds in Czechoslovakia. He had been instrumental in the opening of co-operatives, a clubhouse, a school, a library, for these workers. Yet they persisted in drenching and burning themselves with their fiery beverage, often leaving their wives and children at the mercy of bitter cold and hunger. The heritage of ignorance, repression, poverty, hopelessness, apathy, that had gone into the breeding of such a contempt of life, is beyond the comprehension of the visitor. "And yet they are such lovely people," remarked the puzzled professor. Indeed they are. The well-known qualities of the Slav peasantry—hospitality, eloquence, love of music, love of children, curiosity, shine out of their beautiful blue eyes and out of the prematurely aged and tear drenched faces of their women.

The sun had already set when I went walking in the village of Volovets. A long sprawling village with muddy streets and a roaring mountain creek cutting across its heart. It boasted a saw-mill, several inns, schools and an appalling amount of poverty. I passed a house with a large lawn on which a cow was audibly grazing. I stopped to look at the cow—a big bony creature with a twisted bag and with a ravenous appetite. Of a sudden I heard a woman's voice :

"Where do you come from?"

"From a far-away place," I answered.

She came over, an elderly woman with a black shawl on her head and a thin sunburned and enormously wrinkled face.

"Maybe from Prague?" she asked.

"No, from America," I answered.

"America!" she gasped. "Do people talk of war in America?"

"No, not in America," I said, "or very little."

"Then there'll be no war?" she asked. I gave a shrug.

"It's dreadful, war is—I was here during the last war—and you'll never know how dreadful it was—I saw Russian Cossacks marching in right on this street and from the top of the hill on this side," pointing to the right, "and on that side, came Hungarians and Germans. Oh, it was dreadful—it's better to live only on bread than to see people kill each other. My husband was alive then—and he and I ran and hid—we didn't know whether we'd come out alive—and it frightened him so, my husband, that he died of a weak heart, the poor man, and I've been alone, a widow, very poor, with just one cow, a few hens, two sheep, a garden, and I live—just live—how I cannot tell. It's hard, my dear—and my bones are drying up and my flesh must be tainted or something—I get so tired quickly—a dog's life—an old and sick dog's—and there's nothing I can do—no man, and children as poor as I am—see—my house is dark—I cannot afford a lamp—most of the time I cannot—and if I could sleep it wouldn't be so bad—but I lie awake in the dark—night after night and think—and God only knows what good it does me—but there's nothing else I can do—and sometimes I cry—and I don't feel better. Some people say crying helps them—but it doesn't help me any—not a bit of it—only makes me more miserable . . ." and she broke down, lifted her apron to her face and shook with sobs.

"Forgive me, only it's so hard here—go around and see for yourself how people live—such dark houses, such wretched food—and tell them in America how poor we are—in this unfortunate village of Volovetz!"

"Isn't it better than it was in the old days?" I said.

"For some people it is, and for children, of course, there are new schools—but not for me—a widow—with no land—and so old—but

it's better than war—God, how I hate war—and it's so stupid and wicked—the way they kill each other—for no reason—if one had stolen a horse or a cow from the other—but not even an apple did any of them take away from each other—not an apple—and when they meet they just turn and shoot and kill each other—senseless—so I pray—every Sunday when I go to church and every night and morning—that there should be no war."

The moon came out full and bright and drenched the village and the mountains in a silver flood, and still we stood there and talked—not of war but of the village, its life, its poverty, its fun too, and the longer we talked the more cheerful the old woman grew and when she told me of a woman in the neighbourhood who had turned her drunken husband out of the house in the middle of the night, she laughed—"It was so funny to hear him talk of it the next day—and swear he hadn't been put out of the house at all, because he hadn't even gone in—yes—it was funny," and she laughed again. It was good to hear her laugh and to see the moon brighten her thin and wizened face.

A Jewish shoemaker with a red beard—who cursed Batya because he had ruined his trade and reduced him to poverty—went around with me the next day from house to house. Kindly people everywhere—gladly opening their doors, inviting us inside, instantly breaking into laments—such a harsh life—such unending toil—such meagre rewards—and the weather spoiling crops! The hail had beaten down the oats, the cold had frozen the corn, the rain was rotting the potatoes! House after house without chimney, with the smoke pouring into the room, and blackening the beams and boards of the ceiling, with uneven dirt floors, with now and then an embroidered towel on the wall and a few ikons in the corner the only decorations. And everywhere crowds of children, one just slightly older than the other, many underfed and unkempt. "What could I do?" wailed one woman, barefooted and in a tattered dress, "my husband is ill now—see him"—and she pointed to a bed with a figure covered with a dark-brown blanket—"has fever and back-ache and cannot work—and we have no fields of our own—and we don't get much from the land we rent—and we never see a spoonful of sweet milk or sour milk in this house—and these children—five of them—perhaps it would have been better if I hadn't had them—

but I am a married woman—and my flesh is weak—and so they keep coming—another will arrive in a few months—yes—and I shall have six—and maybe I shall have more in the years to come—and no milk—and only a few hens—and such little bits of potatoes—look at them——” and she tipped towards me a trough half-filled with small and scabby potatoes.

Perhaps in no other parts of the old Hungarian empire are the consequences of misrule so cruelly apparent as in Ruthenia. The Hungarians had driven the Ruthenians from the more fertile plains up the slopes and summits of the mountains and left them with but little land, with, on the average, only 1.66 acres per household, and that of the most barren. Unable to feed themselves off their holdings, many of them, about 300,000, had fled to America. Others hired out as day labourers or seasonal workers to Hungarian landlords. Still others rented land on exorbitant terms, paying the landlord, even when they supplied their own seed, two-thirds of the crop and more. If they were without a cow and bought one through a moneylender they shared the milk on a half-and-half basis, gave the first calf to the moneylender, and held the second, and often they drank up the value of their own calf and lost it before it was born. No roads; hardly any schools and 88 per cent. of the population in 1910 illiterate; few and primitive hospitals; few libraries, no protection against the usurer, the unscrupulous trader; no agricultural aid in the form of credit or guidance or state improvements; wooden implements, impure seeds, primitive breeds of cattle; periodic pestilence and hunger! Such was the condition of Ruthenia under Hungarian rule.

The war had only accentuated these evils, had made Ruthenia a land of desolation with hunger and disease—especially tuberculosis and syphilis—raging in many districts. Yet Hungary, though beaten in the war, had hoped by promises and cajolery to woo Ruthenia back to her fold. But spurred by the wave of nationalism which had come in the wake of the war and with the help of their countrymen in America, the Ruthenians had offered themselves to Czechoslovakia. Then for the first time in their history began a real awakening and a real transformation. Perhaps in no other part of the country and among no other people had the creative powers

of the Czechs so brilliantly asserted themselves as in this far-away and abandoned land. True, there still is appalling misery in Ruthenia, but there is hardly a village or a field which doesn't show evidence of a fresh energy and a fresh aspiration.

"We are not like Hungarians," said a high Czech official while I was visiting Ruthenia. "In old Hungary every tenth person was a nobleman, and even now the ratio holds for the Hungarians in Hungary, so that there are about one million noblemen in that country. Some of them live in utter squalor but on the wall they have a piece of parchment handed by the King in the thirteenth century to an ancestor, and that old document stiffens them against the burdens of life. But we Czechs don't live by the glory of our ancestors. We are not nobles. We're not romanticists. We aren't spendthrifts. We know how hard life is and all our calculations are based on this knowledge. Our sole aim is to make life a little easier and a little nobler."

They certainly have done so in Ruthenia, though economically the country has been a heavy liability to Czechoslovakia. It has not paid its way. It couldn't. So much needed to be done in every field, so poor were the natural resources, that the outlay never was covered by the revenue, directly or indirectly. At conservative estimate the annual deficit had amounted to over 120 million crowns. But that did not deter the Czechs from pushing on with the task of reconstruction and regeneration.

They faced stupendous difficulties. Although Slavs, like the Ruthenians, the Czechs had come from a different civilization and had brought with them not only the ideas and the technique of the West but a personality forged by these ideas and this technique. Their frugality, efficiency, calculatedness, was in striking contrast to the laxity, the slovenliness, the ebullience, the grace, the arrogance of the Hungarian rulers. For a consideration laws could be disregarded under the Hungarians. The only consideration that counted with the Czechs was the performance of duty. It was seldom possible to break them. They allowed no exemption from laws or impunity for negligence to comply with them. A man with ten cows and three horses was no more a hero in the eyes of Czech administrators than a man with no cow and no horses. Therefore Czech demands on a people who had been accustomed to laxity and

neglect proved again and again a burden, even a strain. The Ruthenians protested, grumbled, cried out against the payment of fines. But the Czechs were firm. They avoided abuse, they didn't even talk much. They enforced regulations and taught the people, especially the new generation, to look upon law—*their law*—not as an enemy but as an agency of progress and as a means towards the improvement of their personal lives.

They had other difficulties due to the mixture of populations. In 1930 there were in Ruthenia 115,000 Hungarians. In the old days they had been among the most privileged people, especially the nobility which had held the best lands, the best jobs and enjoyed the greatest advantages in education and social life. Under the Czechoslovak Republic titles were officially wiped out, landed estates were subdivided, official jobs passed into new hands, and of course the Hungarians grumbled. But the Czechs showed no discrimination, other than was necessary to curb the Hungarian intelligentsia from stirring up trouble and from attempting to exploit their old-time superiorities which the law no longer allowed. The Czechs built schools for them in their own language, opened libraries for them and placed at their disposal all the improvements in civic life which they had introduced in Ruthenia.

There were also over 100,000 Jews, largely Orthodox, backward, with a large proportion of impoverished artisans, a surplus of petty traders, and with a strong feeling of hostility against them for the part they had played, under Hungary, in the economic exploitation of the village. The Czechs sought to help them, too, to a new life. They allowed no attack on the moneylender on the grounds of race or religion. They treated him not as a person but as an institution which needed to be corrected or supplanted. So they started credit co-operatives, offered loans on low terms.

Thus with one stroke they smashed the moneylender's hold on village credits at 5 or 6 per cent.

The innkeeper in the village, another exploiting force in old Hungary, likewise faced a new condition of trade. If he chose to advance credit on liquor to a peasant, the law didn't stop him. The law only informed him that a very small amount of the debt, only 16 crowns, or about half a crown, was valid in a court of the

Republic. For the rest he took his chances. He could no longer claim a peasant's cow or calf for an unpaid liquor debt.

Thus in a quiet practical manner the Czechs were solving one of the most perplexing problems in Ruthenia, without ever allowing the smouldering fires of racial hostility to burst into flame. The Jewish innkeeper and Jewish moneylender, like the Hungarian official and the Hungarian gendarme, were to their practical minds products of the old Hungarian civilization.

The Republic had dispensed with the Hungarian gendarmes and the Hungarian official. The Jews remained and they needed special attention and special help, so that they too could adapt themselves to a changing world.

But the Czechs didn't stop with negative acts. They built schools for Jewish children in Ruthenia in their own language and supported organizations and movements whose purpose it was to draw more and more Jews into productive occupations. The Jewish school in Mukachevo, with Hebrew as the dominant language, was one of the most advanced and best equipped schools I had seen in Czechoslovakia. The principal and the teachers spoke optimistically of a gradual and happy solution of the problem of their people in Ruthenia. More and more of them became farmers, artisans, factory workers—and the Czechs were opening fresh opportunities for them to enter these occupations.

There were other nationalities in Ruthenia which demanded special attention. There were over 13,000 Germans, 12,000 Rumanians, 1500 Gipsies. These minorities likewise enjoyed the benefits of the liberal policies the Republic had been pursuing. Even the Gipsies had a school in Ushorod. I visited the school. The principal and the teachers admitted that it was a strenuous task to discipline Gipsy boys and girls, who in their home life had known little of the meaning of restraint. But children like play, especially Gipsy children, and by means of an appeal to their love of play and adventure and especially to their feeling for music, they managed to keep up their interest in their school work.

Poverty showed in their tattered garments and their under-nourished bodies. Yet their eyes flickered with curiosity and good humour and their little bodies danced with energy. Every boy had

a violin and would rather play it than study books or listen to lessons on hygiene. When recess came they burst out of the school-house with a volcanic yell, and whether they had enough clothes to cover their bodies or were half-naked, they dashed wildly about the schoolyard, running races, wrestling, shouting, just for the joy of activity. This was the first generation of Gipsies in Ruthenia that had known compulsory education, and most of them were destined for a life which neither their parents nor any of their ancestors had ever known.

Most embarrassing and most harassing to the Czechs were the continuous conflicts within the ranks of the Ruthenian population and those Russians and Ukrainians who had come to live among them. There were two churches in the country, the Uniat, associated with Rome, and the Greek Orthodox. In the first there were, according to the official figures, 359,107, and in the second 112,034 souls. The two churches had never been on friendly terms. After all, their religions were different. Now a fresh element of irritation had crept into their relations—nationalism. The Galician Ukrainians, impassioned nationalists, allied chiefly with the Uniat church, were determined to draw the Ruthenians into the orbit of Ukrainian nationalism. The Russian emigrés, not as numerous and allied chiefly with the Greek Orthodox church, resolved to draw the Ruthenians into Russian nationalism. The fight went on and on with increasing passion, and acrimony, involving churches and schools and their Ruthenian institutions.

I met a number of Ruthenian priests of both churches who were disgusted with the quarrel. The old priest in Volovets said to me :

"It's a tragedy the way these immigrants in our midst are trying to get us to quarrel with one another over Ukrainian and Great Russian nationalism. We've been united with Czechoslovakia, not with the Ukraine or Great Russia. It's a sordid business." Ruthenian school teachers and other intellectuals felt as disheartened with the nationalist squabble as some of the priests. Meanwhile, the peasantry, just stirring into nationalist consciousness, had grown more and more confused and disrupted. There were in Ruthenia schools in three different languages—Ukrainian, Ruthenian and Great Russian! And each of these factions was fighting with zeal

and acrimony for the control of the speech and education of every child.

With such an array of nationalities, never in all their history on terms of friendliness towards one another, with all of them habituated to a civilization of laxity and primitiveness, with the Ruthenians themselves split into fighting factions, with even the question of language unsettled and the subject of bitter quarrels, with the country backward, impoverished, ravaged by infections, diseases, and lacking in resources to make it affluent, the task of the Czechs was from the start beset by endless difficulties and vexations. Of course they made many errors, sometimes inexcusable ones. They themselves readily admitted their imperfection and their blunders. Yet what strikes the observer as he wanders around the country is evidence at every hand, not of blunders, but of regeneration. The creative energies the Czechs had set in motion from the moment of their arrival had never ceased to function. Like the waters of a river they flowed over the land, stirring every person they touched into a fresh adjustment and a fresh outlook on life. Within only twenty years of administration they had advanced further in every phase of human endeavour than in all the years that they had misgoverned that unhappy land. Perhaps in no part of the country had the extraordinary feeling of the Czechs for reality and their competence attained such high distinction as in Ruthenia. A land of desolation, it had, in spite of the misery and poverty that hovered over every village, been given the understanding and the benefits of a humane and scientific civilization. It had been made to discover a new way of work and a new way of life.

Dr. Peishe, the superintendent of the hospital at Mukachevo, told me that on his arrival he discovered that the only form of cure in which the peasants trusted was medicine. If they complained of a backache or swollen legs which was caused by kidney disease they asked for a mixture with which to rub their backs or their legs. If they were told that no medicine within the knowledge of science could remove the pain from their back or the swelling in their legs, unless they changed their mode of living and followed a prescribed diet, they laughed or got angry and went home convinced that the new doctors didn't know their business. The

amount of tuberculosis among the peasantry was enormous but no peasant would at first submit to the treatment of collapsing the infected lung. For a long time Dr. Peishe was puzzled how to break this distrust in one of the most proved methods of treating the disease. Then he decided to persuade three Jewish sufferers from tuberculosis to undergo the operation. They got well and thereafter whenever a peasant refused to submit to the operation he sent for these Jews and let them do the talking and the persuading.

Nephritis was also widely prevalent among the peasantry and to obtain the best results the doctors usually recommended a stay in the hospital. But peasants and even town people were frightened of hospitals. They were sure that if they went there they would never come out alive. They associated a hospital not with recuperation but with death. It took an inordinate amount of persuasion to break down this ancient conception of the nature and function of a hospital.

Once a peasant came to the clinic with his son, a boy of twelve. The boy suffered from nephritis, and the doctor recommended a stay of two weeks in the hospital so that the boy could be given the benefit of its up-to-date electrical treatments and of proper nursing.

"How much will it cost?" asked the peasant.

"In your case because of the amount of property you have, the hospital will have to charge between five or six hundred crowns."

"Oh, no," said the peasant. "I love my son, but I have seven children and if I lose one, I'll still have six children left. But if I spend five or six hundred crowns, I won't get them back so easily."

"So you see," said Dr. Peishe, as he related the story to me, "what we were up against when we came here, the kind of people we had to deal with, the maze of prejudices and superstitions we had to break down. But—we are winning our battle, and that's a real reward to those of us who have given years of our life to the fight."

The doctor's words went beyond a boast. Now, if a peasant had tuberculosis, he often asked for the treatment which "chokes all

the bad air out of the lung." What was even more important he would come to the physician in the early stages of the disease. He learned to seek medical advice as soon as anything was wrong with him, and since there were many physicians in the country and they were stationed in the most far away villages, they were usually within easy reach. If a peasant had syphilis, or suspected he had it, he would hurry for an examination. If he failed to return for treatment the police or the physician searched him out and demanded an explanation, and if it was a case of indifference or neglect, they imposed a fine on the man. Of course he argued and protested. A fine for not reporting to the doctor for treatment—who had ever heard of such insolence? But the Czechs were firm. They meant to enforce medical discipline, and in time the peasantry learned to appreciate its importance and no longer laid themselves open to fines.

Maternity was another serious medical problem in Ruthenia. The village midwives with their ignorance of hygiene and sanitation, had been a cause of infection and death among Ruthenian mothers. The Czechs therefore lost no time in establishing a training school for midwives. Within a short time it became renowned all over Ruthenia, and its graduates, over 500 of them, won acclaim all over the countryside.

Dysentery and spotted fever the Czechs had also combated with astounding success. Thus with their medical service alone the Czechs had brought to Ruthenia one of the most regenerating forces it had ever known.

Basically the age-old problem in Ruthenia had always been food. Of its 5000 square miles of territory only one fourth had been arable. The lands on the slopes and on the summits of the mountains to which the Hungarians had driven the native population were not only hard to work but low in fertility. They could be improved but old Hungary had never bothered to bring to the peasantry a knowledge of the ways of doing it. But the Czechs lost no time in applying themselves with their usual energy to the solution of this problem. Their first task of course was to feed the famine-stricken population. The war had ruined and

devastated most of the country and there was little bread to be had, so they shipped in trainloads of bread, and at once put an end to the famine.

In the years between 1921 and 1923 inclusive they spent 25 million crowns on food alone. Then they carried out their far-reaching land reform, and the peasants got new allotments of land. The average holding under the Hungarians was 1.66 acres. Now for 93 per cent of the peasantry it had mounted to an average of 6.2 acres.

Yet land alone could never solve the agricultural problem in Ruthenia, especially when so much of it was poor and the climate was so stern. The new health services which the Czechs had so widely and so successfully entrenched had in a measure aggravated the problem the agricultural experts had come to solve. In the decade between 1920 and 1930 in Bohemia, inhabited chiefly by Czechs, the population had increased by six per cent, but in Ruthenia it had grown by twenty per cent, chiefly in the villages. Like all Slavs the Ruthenians are endowed with a remarkable fecundity and neither sophistication nor education had as yet interfered with its natural processes. Had Ruthenia been rich enough in raw materials to permit the development of large scale industry, the surplus rural population could go off to the factory. But the industrial possibilities of the country must always remain limited. Meanwhile, there was need of increasing its supplies of food, and the only method under existing conditions was to make the land yield more bountiful harvests. This was the chief task in agriculture which had confronted the Czech experts, and in no other part of the country—Slovakia or Bohemia—had I observed such a vast amount of improvements as in Ruthenia. Perhaps the results there were more visible because the country had been so much more backward. But by comparison with what it had been at the end of the war, it was a transformed land. The Czechs had brought modern implements, a knowledge of the proper selection of seeds, of proper ploughing and cultivation, of timely sowing and harvesting. They opened a number of agricultural schools. They launched experimental stations, separate ones for the mountains and for the valleys. They founded forty different agricultural societies, all engaged in the study of fresh methods of farming.

They bought steers in Switzerland and crossed them with local stock to obtain a new breed especially fitted to local conditions. They started projects in irrigation, particularly in the valleys, and in reclamation in the mountains where about 90 per cent. of the land was still wild and barely used except for pasture. They introduced beet-sugar and tobacco. Experiments with rice and cotton failed but experiments with other crops were continuing. They started forty-three nurseries for fruit trees and grape-vines. They built three modern wine-cellars. They encouraged the man without a cow to buy one and furnished him with credit when he needed it. They never ceased to impress the peasant with the enormous value of manure, and taught him to build special manure silos in which to preserve it from deterioration. The agricultural experts were frantic when they spoke of the immense amounts of manure that was still wasted through sheer ignorance. Computed in terms of money this waste, so they informed me, amounted to 100 million crowns annually! The institution of the agricultural agent had become a part of Ruthenian rural social life and so had the institutions of winter courses for adults. They had built 135 agricultural schools for young people and about 100,000 boys and girls had already graduated from them. They promulgated with the help of the state eighty co-operative creameries and endless other co-operatives.

Of course all these innovations and improvements were only the foundation on which to erect a system of intensive agriculture, the sorest need of Ruthenia, and the one hope of overcoming famine and of lifting the population to a creditable standard of living. In the pre-Munich days the Czechoslovak Government had seriously been searching for ways of raising funds with which eventually to realize this hope. Left to themselves the Ruthenians, with the best will in the world, could not hope to bring it to fruition.

That was one reason why the Republic had launched a wide-spread campaign to attract people from all over the world as tourists to Ruthenia. The place offered superb advantages—primeval forests with much game, mountains and valleys with streams in which to bathe and to fish, far-away country roads for hiking, camps, inns, and, above all, to the socially-minded person, a peasantry which though poor was friendly and hospitable with a body of songs and customs that might prove a source of pleasure and exhilaration to

the men and women from the modern metropolis in western Europe and in America. Nor was this campaign unsuccessful. Wherever I travelled I saw groups of tourists walking along the dirt roads, climbing mountains, picnicking round an open fire on the banks of a stream, fishing, berrying, and in other ways enjoying the rugged scenery and the refreshing outdoors of this far-away and inviting land.

But "man lives not by bread alone," and the Czech administrators in Ruthenia and the native youth that had been coming out of schools, understood this. The people had to be stirred into a fresh understanding of themselves and of the world about them through the school and the printed word. The Czechs had always revered learning. They would bring it to Ruthenia. At the end of the war there was not a single school there in the native language. In 1921 there were 530 such schools with an attendance of 90,138 students. In 1937-38 there were 800 such schools with 144,822 students. Illiteracy had dropped from 77 per cent. in 1910 to less than 30 per cent. in 1930, and among the young or those under twenty years of age there was scarcely any illiteracy. Education had become compulsory up to the age of fourteen. Peasants often complained that they needed their son or their daughter at home to pasture the cow or the sheep or to help with the digging of potatoes. But the Czechs were adamant. The discipline in compulsory education was even more holy than the discipline in the compulsory treatment of certain diseases. Complaints and pleas availed little. If peasants grumbled and said that the Czechs were severe and inhuman the Czech administrators made no replies. Laxity and disorder were a transgression which they could neither ignore nor forgive.

Libraries likewise had begun to spread. In 1935 there were 592 of them. The Germans, who had not had any in the pre-Republic days, now had 22, the Hungarians 109, the Ruthenians 421. Newspapers, magazines, books in the languages of the racial minorities and in Russian, Ukrainian and Ruthenian had enjoyed ever-increasing patronage.

Late one evening a Ruthenian school teacher and I went walking in the streets of Ushorod, the capital of Ruthenia in the pre-Munich days. My companion was a nationalist and kept up a steady and eloquent stream of talk on Ruthenian culture, Ruthenian destiny,

Ruthenian glory. We passed many new and modern public buildings and with pride my companion pointed them out to me and explained their functions—schools, hospitals, offices, social centres, a theatre. “Of course,” he said, “compared to New York or some other city in your country, Ushorod is a village. The population is only about 30,000, more than we’ve ever had and it is growing. Some day there’ll be 50,000 people here or perhaps 100,000 and we Ruthenians shall have a real city, yes, a real city,” he repeated with enthusiasm, “and it’ll be Ruthenian, not Russian or Ukrainian, but Ruthenian. Like Russians and Ukrainians we are Slavs but we are a separate people, we’re Ruthenians, and please don’t fail to say so when you write about us. We are proud of being Ruthenians, very proud.”

When we passed the hospital which was also the seat of the school for midwives, my companion paused and talked with ecstasy of its meaning and achievements in his far-away Ruthenia. “They have saved thousands of lives, these wonderful girls who have come out of there—yes, Ruthenian girls mostly, fresh from our villages, but gifted, I tell you, for we are gifted people, and we believe in our national destiny.”

Then we walked along the river front. “In the old days,” my companion went on, “there was hardly anything here—and look at it—look at these wonderful buildings—and lawns and flowers—beautiful, isn’t it?” It was beautiful this new street all agleam even by electric light with the grey square-cornered and modern office-buildings and apartment houses which had been built since the coming of the Czechoslovak Republic. “And to think,” he went on bitterly, “that we could have long ago had all these buildings and all the progress that we are now enjoying if the Hungarians had cared for us at least as much as for their cattle . . . but they didn’t—didn’t—they cared nothing for our health or our comfort—or our national destiny. They wanted to make Hungarians out of us and only poor submissive starving Hungarians. . . .”

“But,” I said, “would you have had all this progress—schools, hospitals, roads, and all these modern buildings on the river front—which make a street of which any city in the world would be proud—would you have had all—if it hadn’t been for the Czechs?”

“Of course not,” he burst out almost frantically, “we Ruthenian

nationalists deep in our hearts feel a tremendous gratitude to our Czech brethren. But—we've grown up now—we can take care of ourselves—and the Czechs should realize it and—give us the autonomy which they have promised—so that we can push on with our own hands towards our national destiny."

My companion was a young man in the late twenties, with broad bony face and small eyes that flickered with emotion as he talked. Nationalism was his ideal and his religion and there was no doubt as to the man's sincerity. And yet I wondered what would happen to the vast array of public institutions which the Czechs have built for the Ruthenians not only in Ushorod but all over the country, if they had actually withdrawn and left it all to the management of the young but still untrained and impulsive Ruthenian intelligentsia, who had already become involved in the fierce clash of the rival Russian and Ukrainian nationalist parties?

I have since wondered what has become of the eloquent school teacher and his dream of Ruthenia's national destiny?

## Chapter XI

### A VILLAGE OF SONG AND LAUGHTER

THE name of the village Chichmany—as Slovaks pronounce it, had a soothing sound. I first heard of it from a member of the British legation in Prague. He and his wife had visited it and spoke of it with enthusiasm. I heard of it again from a young Slovak who was educated in America and who was now teaching school in his homeland. He too spoke of it with enthusiasm. “The most charming people you have ever met,” he said while telling me his experiences with the Chichmany peasants.

I heard of the village once more at Turcansky Svatymartin, Mecca of Slovak nationalism and of the Slovak intelligentsia. In the museum there I saw exhibits of Chichmany costumes, distinguished not by richness of colouring as much as by liveliness of design, with a distinctive Byzantine flavour in the cap and bodice. It was also in that museum that I saw the duplication of a rare old house in Chichmany, with as gay and bright a decoration on the outside as I had ever beheld in any peasant village. “This is an indigenous Chichmany style of architecture,” said one of the scientists of the museum. The white geometric figures that made up the scheme of the decoration glistened with liveliness and cheer. “And these Chichmany peasants,” explained the scientists, “also have their own songs. The Matitsa (Slovak Academy of Arts and Science) here has collected many of them.” Here then was a village which in the centuries of its existence had developed its own style of costumes, its own style of architecture, its own style of song—a village of extraordinary artistic talent.

So I decided to go to Chichmany.

“When you get there,” said Doctor Leopold Ruppeldt, one of the leading Slovak Lutheran ministers, “be sure to call on Father Shtrbe, the Roman Catholic priest. He’s a remarkable man and will give you invaluable information about the village and its people.”

On my arrival in Chichmany I inquired of a Jewish innkeeper whether he was acquainted with Father Shtrbe? With pride he answered, "He's been taking his meals with my family for fourteen years—yes?" He turned to his wife, a short, dark-eyed woman with the face of a Biblical Miriam and with an expression as desolate as the weather outside. "Twelve years," she said, a little indistinctly. "Yes, twelve years," repeated the burly innkeeper, "or maybe it's longer—and he likes everything we set before him," he continued.

"Is he a Hlinka man?" I asked.

The innkeeper nodded and pointed proudly to a portrait of the dead priest on the wall of the sitting-room, as if to impress me with his own respect for the founder of the Slovak People's Party. A village priest, a Hlinka man, on terms of good fellowship with a Jewish innkeeper, taking his meals in a Jewish home, a friend of one of the foremost Lutheran preachers in Slovakia—in that part of the world, for centuries a crucible of racial and religious feuds, such relationships testified to an extraordinary character. So I went to call on Father Shtrbe.

His house rose steep on a hill in the centre of the village and as I was mounting the pathway I could gather a sweeping glimpse of the surrounding mountains clothed with patches of dense forest, with field crops, with pasturage. A ray of sunlight cleft the mist on a faraway slope and I could see peasants stooping over land and little boys and girls foddering cows and sheep. One did not need to be a trained agriculturist to appreciate that the stern climate and the steepness of the lands, made the struggle for a livelihood in Chichmany a severe ordeal. Here were none of the fat black lowlands which I had seen in the valleys outside of the city of Koshitse and which had been the inheritance chiefly of Hungarian peasants.

While I waited for the door to open I observed that the walk around the priest's house was cracked and the lawn was untrimmed and overgrown with weeds. Evidently the Father gave little heed to his surroundings.

He himself came to the door. Opening it wide, bowing and smiling, he welcomed me inside and with a flow of hospitable chatter ushered me into his study. It was a huge, barren room with many

windows, looking out on the mountains and with a desk and chairs all heaped with papers. So poorly was the room cared for that in the upper corner of a window immediately behind the desk shone a sheaf of cobwebs. Like the cracked sidewalk and the untrimmed lawn the condition of the room testified to an indifference to outward appearance or to comfort. But the priest was an impressive personage. Tall, unshaven, with light brown hair receding at the forehead and white at the temples he was, in spite of his middle age, a picture of buoyant health. His large blue eyes flashed with energy and his big body, draped carelessly in a frayed black gown, swayed and moved with the alertness of youth.

Without even asking me who I was and what I wanted he launched into a lament of the inclement weather and of the hardships that it was imposing on the people. Glancing out of the windows at the distant mountains and rolling fields he said :

"Just look! People are working in the rain, trying to save barley and oats. And the potatoes, too, are rotting from wetness. We'll have a hard winter, very hard." And once more he glanced contemplatively out of the window and shook not only his head but his whole body. Then, with a sprightly toss of the hands and smiling, he said :

"But you'll like the people here; their speech is beautiful. They sing a lot, and they never worry—not much, anyway."

Then I told him who I was and why I had come to Chichmany. Instantly, with growing expansiveness he launched into talk about America. Many peasants from Chichmany had gone there. Many people from all over Slovakia had fled there from Hungarian oppression and from the stern ways of nature in their homeland. Yes, about one third of the Slovakian population had pulled up stakes and emigrated in search of a freer and more durable life. Had I ever been to Detroit? He had a brother there, a baker. Had I ever been to Pittsburg, Cleveland, Chicago? In these cities there were large Slovak populations—hard-working folk—and they would never return to the land of their birth—except, perhaps, for a visit—and so, of course, he, like Slovaks everywhere, was always happy to receive visitors from America—the one land that had offered asylum to their countrymen in the grimdest days of their history . . . Yes, he would like to go to America—not to live there;

he wouldn't leave his people now that they were experiencing a rebirth, but to browse around and see his countrymen and gather fresh impressions about man and life and the world in which man was living . . . On and on he talked with real Slav fervour and open-heartedness.

Then I asked him to tell me something of his village.

"Ah! I'll show you something very rare and very, very beautiful," he said with reverence and elation.

He went into the next room, and returned carrying in his arms two long and bulky cloth-bound volumes.

"Here," he said, opening one of the volumes. "This is a record of marriage in this village from 1709 on. Beautiful handwriting, isn't it?"

The writing was in Latin, in an even hand with a fullbodied roundness and with scarcely a trace of dimness, with only the paper slightly yellowed and the corners of some of the pages frayed not from age but from excessive thumbing.

"People took pride in their script in those days. See how they did," he went on, as he kept turning page after page, with glowing eyes, of the superb penmanship of his forefathers. Clean pages, all of them, without a splotch of ink anywhere. "Writing was a great art then, a very great art," he remarked again. And after a pause he went on, a little gravely: "People were different in those days. Just look." And he pointed with his finger at a column of names and figures. "They married young. Here is one couple, the man eighteen, the girl seventeen. Here is another, the man nineteen, the girl eighteen; and the others, all the way down, were of the same age. And here is one bride only sixteen. Yes, they married young, and they stayed married."

"And now?"

He made no answer and I pressed for none.

In silence he turned more and more pages of this ancient and superb script, and the names and figures leaped out of the columns with a lifelike energy and gave one the illusion of a record not of dead souls but of living people: not of men and women who were no longer even a memory—peasants quickly forgot far-away ancestors—but who were still astir with the joy and promise of living. The world of to-day seemed as if blotted out of sight, and

the world of yesterday, a far-away yesterday, but clothed in the flesh and blood of earthly existence and earthly ecstasy, hovered before us.

Chichmany was an old village dating back to the thirteenth century, when Slovaks had fled to the mountains from the advancing armies of Hungarians and Turks. Here, away from the main-travelled road and amidst harsh natural surroundings, with soil and climate offering no lure of riches or even comfort, they were safe from molestation by the ferocious enemy. The roads during the inclement seasons in winter and in summer cut them off from the world outside, and the people lived as best they could—as shepherds, tillers of the soil, artisans, but nurturing their own language, their own social usages, and giving birth to fresh forms of self-expression in song, in dances, in architecture, in handwork with needle or knife.

There was a church in the village in 1669, a school in 1709, first in the Slovak language, then in both Slovak and Magyar; then, since 1907, only in Magyar, until the coming of the Republic. The people had always been poor, but not despondent. They loved to sing, to joke, to dance, to decorate their houses with their own colour schemes and their persons with embroidered emblems which in part had come from ancient Byzantium and in part they had borrowed from nature. Nobody ever could subdue them, neither man nor nature. That was why, in spite of poverty and hardship, they were rugged, cheerful, and friendly.

In recent years contacts with the outside world had wrought changes in them. Many had gone to America, or France, many were leaving their homes and going off in summer and late winter with packs on their backs, to peddle home-made embroideries and other products of their own creation as well as factory-made goods, to supplement their income from the land. Husbands were going off by themselves or with their wives; sometimes wives were going off by themselves, leaving their families at home, in the care of an older child or a grandmother. In the course of these wanderings they picked up new ideas, new pastimes, new dissipations, which were a defiance and a denial of the old attitudes and the old morality. Formerly, peasants celebrated weddings three days and even longer. Now one day was good enough. Formerly, when a

boy courted a girl, his father and mother made him marry her before he could fall in love with another girl. Now young people didn't mind shifting their affections from one person to another; they married, not in their late teens, especially men, but in their late twenties or thirties, or older. Formerly marriage was so hallowed a condition of living that at the feast which followed the funeral, amidst the eating, the singing, the widow who had just buried her husband, was sometimes mated to another man!

Now—well!

The good Father would not speak of the irregularities and derelictions that contact with the outside world had brought into this ancient and isolated and still God-fearing village. But then, the people could sing, and loved to sing, and had a song of their own which had spilled out of their sturdy hearts for every possible occasion in their lives. Oh, I would love his people—he hoped so, anyway. . . .

In a driving rain with dusk settling over the mountains and the village, I descended from the priest's house and made my way to the office of the notary—the village clerk—a personage of exalted eminence in any Slovak or Czech community, with more precise information on the life of the people than even a priest might command.

The notary was a man of about fifty, with a square sallow face, a black moustache and an expression of vivacity and sternness in his small, glowing, dark eyes. Rising, and clicking his heels together, bowing with chivalric grace, he shook my hand and invited me to a seat beside him. He was a full-blooded Hungarian, and had been a notary for a long time. Of course he would give me a complete picture of the village, fresh from his latest records. . . . Well then, first, did I know that Graf Leopold Berchtold, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the old Austro-Hungarian Empire—yes, the very one who had been accused of starting the World War—had owned a large estate in the village? He never had lived there. Often, in the old days, he came to hunt boar, and that was all. The Czechoslovak Republic had taken over his lands, and some of it, about one hundred and sixty-five acres of the arable soil, it had distributed among the peasantry; one hundred and seventy more of pasture it

had assigned to the village in communal ownership; and the remainder, which was forest, it had sold to a stock company made up of one hundred and forty-nine citizens of the village. With a stock company in control the forest could be easily preserved and easily fitted into the scheme of national planning for all forests. . . .

Now hardly a person in the village was without some land, though the parcels were small and were too widely scattered. Three peasants owned respectively seventy-three, eighty-six, seventy-nine acres. The others had to be content with from about one to five acres. The land was not bad, but the climate was ferocious. There were only four hundred cows in the village, two hundred head of young stock. The population consisted of thirteen hundred souls, or three hundred families, and they lived in two hundred and sixty houses. At least a hundred families were without cows, or about one-third of the village. But nearly everybody kept one or more goats, and no more than twenty families were with neither cow nor goat. . . . Richer peasants, also, had sheep and geese, but nearly everybody kept hens. There were only fifty-two horses in the village—an average of one for each six families; a sad record; sadder still because there were no oxen in the village. Half of the peasantry were also without pigs!

The statistical picture of the village bore out vividly the priest's declaration that Chichmany was a poor village. With one-third of the families without a cow, one-half without a pig, and only one horse to six families; with the average land holdings no more than five acres, its property base was dismally low. That was why so many people from Chichmany had gone to America, and why about one-third of those in the village were going off periodically on long journeys to peddle home-made articles and factory-made products in their own country, in Poland, above all in France. A few of them remained in France, became naturalized and married there. But most of them clung to the village. They loved to come back from the turmoil of the outside world to its beautiful mountains and to its cheerful people.

Yes, it was true that the ancient sex morality was giving way to worldly lightheartedness, and some women—perhaps as many as sixty—had given birth to children outside of wedlock. But they had never known venereal disease in the village, nor any "wild-

ness"—women running from one man to another; or men from one woman to another. No promiscuity; only unconventional relationships which often ended in marriage. "For love—yes, for money never," said a visitor in the notary's office.

Nor was it a disgrace for a woman to have a child outside of wedlock, though, of course, her chances of marrying a young man were utterly thwarted. This was in subversion of the morality that usually prevailed in the Slavic villages I had known.

"And I'll tell you something else rather remarkable about this village," said the slow-worded, quiet-voiced notary, turning the pages of his records: "deaths occur here only in infancy up to the age of one or later after the age of fifty: seldom during the ages in between. Yes, look at the records."

He pointed to the year 1936; three deaths between one and fifty; and to 1937 with four deaths between these ages.

"You see, if a child survives the first year it is certain of living to at least fifty. Remarkable, isn't it?"

The nearest physician was in the village of Rajec, some ten miles away—a long distance on the side roads of Eastern Slovakia.

"Would you like to hear our Chichmany songs?" asked the notary's daughter.

"Most assuredly," I answered.

"Wait here," she said. "I'll be back soon." And she glided out of the house. She was twenty-one, taller than her father, and had his black hair, his dark eyes only larger and more animated, his full-lipped mouth, and even more of his grace. She had graduated from a Slovak teachers' college, and though she spoke Slovak like a native, she had failed to receive an appointment in a school. After all, she was a Madyarka (Hungarian), and Slovaks were not disposed to favour members of her nationality with positions as teachers. So she stayed at home and waited, the pride of her dignified father, the concern of her educated mother. In her silences more than in her words the mother conveyed her chagrin at the necessity of living in a village which held out scanty promise of a professional career or of a good match for her alert and vivacious daughter.

Presently the girl returned and said: "Come with me."

I followed her outdoors. The rains had simmered down to a drizzle but there were water holes and puddles in the streets.

Finally we reached our destination, a low peasant hut, bright with lamplight, a crackling fire in the wood stove. The Madyarka introduced me to the woman of the house, short, smiling, cross-eyed, with a gleaming gold tooth, and to two girls, neighbours, who had been invited to come in and sing for me. One of them was about fifteen with short light-brown hair, a broad face and smiling eyes; the other was younger, with a sunburned face and an expression of dignified maturity. At the table, with his head propped on his hands, was a little boy of about three, with a pale and handsome face, made paler and more handsome by luxurios flaxen hair.

"My son," said the woman, with pride.

"They'll sing for you," said the notary's daughter, pointing to the woman and the two girls, who had already drawn together against the wall in the middle of the room.

"Which songs do you like best?" asked the woman with the golden tooth.

"Any Chichmany song," I said. "I've never heard them."

So they started. Not one of them knew any notes. They sang, as did all the people in the village, only from memory. Yet they sang in three parts, the alto of the dignified little girl rising in a beautiful wail above the high and the low sopranos of her companions:

*Sheep, nothing but sheep on the hill;  
We have little hay in the stall.  
There's hoar frost on the hill;  
Where shall we keep our sheep during winter?  
I shall be their shepherd;  
I shall sleep high up in that barn.  
Give us chief shepherd, some cheese and whey,  
So we'll grow up to be big girls.*

In Slovak the delicacy and melodiousness of the words alone stir the emotions, but not so much as the melancholy tune. So moved was I by the singing that when they stopped I hardly realized they had finished the song.

"In America you hear more beautiful singing," said the woman with the golden tooth. "We are peasants, and we sing only to please ourselves."

"You'd please anybody in America," I replied. "It's amazing how beautifully you sing."

The woman laughed and said: "If that's the way you feel we'll sing some more."

So they sang again, this time a short song, more plaintive than the first.

*When I pastured cows they gave me no butter,  
Only a piece of bread,  
And Vanushek (the rowdy of the village)  
Has taken it from me.*

I asked them to sing it again, and they repeated it with what seemed even greater sadness in their voices. But they weren't sad. The woman with the gold tooth gave a merry laugh and the two girls joined her. The songs expressed the trials and disappointments of the people in this far-off mountain village, but only objectively as far as these singers were concerned. They laughed so merrily that the little boy with the golden hair also laughed and his mother waved at him and he laughed again; and then his eyes wandered towards me and he grew instantly silent.

"Sing some more," said the notary's daughter.

"A lively song—yes?" said the woman, with a sprightly toss of the head.

I nodded.

So they sang a sprightly song of only two lines:

*I shan't yet marry, I'll wait a while  
For the sake of my dark eyes.*

"You girls in Chichmany are mischievous," I said.

"We're of all kinds here," answered the woman and laughed again, a lilting, carefree laugh.

"Sing some more," I said.

She nodded and they sang once more:

"*Chichmany, Chichmany, you beautiful village,  
Out of which come most beautiful youths.*"

And again:

"*Up there on the top of the Polyany,  
There is a painted fence.  
He who painted it loved a pretty girl  
And a cavalier chopped it up.*"

"So there's jealousy here, too, just as in America?" I said.

"Maybe more," said the little woman. And they sang again, a long song, the most moving of the evening, in a minor key almost in a monotone, and all the more stirring because of the perfect blending of the voices:

"*The four bells of Chichmany,  
They rang for us beautifully.  
I fell in love with a girl,  
But they didn't give her to me.*

*If they didn't give her to me,  
What matters it?  
I shall become a soldier,  
Take my clothes with me  
And get enlisted.*

*And down there, near the Little Danube,  
Where hussars are recruiting  
I'll go and ask  
What they'll give me for my services?*

*And they told me I'll get only a ducat.  
What a pity, my beloved!  
What a terrible pity about you!"*

"And who is the woman—our hostess?" I asked my guide.

"A peasant woman, the mother of that lovely boy; but she has no husband."

"A widow?"

"No; the man who's the father of the boy is married to another woman. Such things do happen here."

"And who is the dignified little girl? She sings so beautifully."

"A shepherd girl."

"No?"

"Yes, of course, in the daytime she pastures cows on the mountains." I glanced at her again. Her face was red with sunburn and with flush and as she stood there against the wall with her eyes lowered and absentmindedly lacing and unlacing the fingers of her hands, she seemed an epitome of modesty and self-effacement. Yet with a voice like hers, so soft and so warm an alto, she could move any audience to rapture and tears.

"What's her name?" I asked.

"Bozhena," answered the Madyarka.

"Bozhena (divine)!" I exclaimed, "what a fitting name for a girl with so glorious a voice."

"And the other girl," explained the Madyarka, "is the mother of eight children," and she broke into a laugh.

"But she is so young."

"Only fifteen, but her parents are in France peddling, and she takes care of her eight brothers and sisters and her grandmother. She does all the baking and cooking and washing and everything—all alone! Her grandmother is too old to help her much, now."

Yet she looked neither weary nor unhappy. She was bending over the little boy, fondling him and laughing with him.

At the request of her father the Madyarka dressed up in her Chichmany costume. Now that I saw it on her it didn't seem as simple and austere as when I had seen it, perhaps too casually, at the Museum of Turcansky Svatymartin. There was rich colour in it, but not in such wild splashes as in the costume of Maurenka in the Moravian village. The sleeves of the blouse were puffed out, and the skirt was a mass of closely-packed pleats, precisely as in all Slovak costumes I had seen; but the colour scheme was more simple. There was red and yellow in the broad belt, silver and purple in the skirt, more red in the broad band that hung like a tie from the throat; the strings of the slippers were black,

the stockings white, though sometimes—so the mother explained—they were yellow or red. The girl's head was bare.

"Where is your hat?" I asked.

"Girls don't wear any," she flung back smiling. And as an afterthought and perhaps only as a boast of her modern manner of thinking, she added: "Not until after they're married."

She walked up and down the room, a glory to the eye, a "measureless content" to the heart.

"A beautiful costume?" said the father with elation.

"Especially on her," I added.

With a coquettish curtsey she said:

"Thank you." And with measured and graceful tread she walked off into the next room.

"Yes, beauty of dress is the one thing the people of Chichmany know and love," remarked the notary.

Early in the morning I went for a stroll. It rained again but not heavily. The creek which coursed through the main street roared with the fresh torrents that had tumbled into it from the mountains, and the geese, as if in excitement over the swollen waters, waddled along the grassy banks and cackled boisterously. For some reason one flock, flapping its wings and cackling in an ever-rising crescendo, started towards a woman who was in the creek bent over her washing. Turning, the woman splashed handfuls of water at them and shouted gaily, "Away with you, away with you!" Then as they turned and fled cackling piercingly, she shouted again and threw more handfuls of water after them, and shook with laughter.

"I never knew," she said addressing me, "I had so much attraction for geese." And again she laughed.

"Maybe they like you because you laugh so much," I said.

"It's good to laugh," she said, and bent over her washing.

"It's good to laugh!" Never had I heard such words from a middle-aged woman in any Slav village I had ever visited. I thought of the middle-aged women I had seen in Russian and Polish villages. Overburdened with work, mothers of large families, with children often sick and dying for lack of proper care, themselves subject to ailments that racked the body, abused by husbands, victims of all the manifold "idiocies" of village life,

they looked old and drawn and were sullen and harsh and on the least provocation cursed the world and themselves and all who were near to them. Yet here was this Slovak woman, broad of frame with hefty legs, with her coiled blonde hair, even in the dismalness of an overcast sky, shining with brightness, and saying amidst laughter, "It's good to laugh!"

"You're a cheerful soul," I said.

She looked up, surveyed me, and smiled.

"Aren't women cheerful where you come from?" she said.

"Not as cheerful as you seem to be," I answered.

She gave a shrug and a chuckle, and her broad and browned face gathered friendliness and charm with every wrinkle that it mustered.

"That's the way a lot of us are in this village," she said and went back to her work.

A few of the houses in the village were new, one and two-story structures, and as modern as in any small town. These were the homes of men and women who had all their lives been going "*hauserovat*" (peddling from house to house) all over the country, and in those foreign lands, like France, to which they still had easy access. Not all of them had amassed sums large enough to pay for a new house—such fortunate souls were few—but the houses they had built were a testimony to their prosperity and to their worldliness.

The ordinary peasant house in Chichmany was built of timber and its distinctive feature was external decoration—the white, geometric figures which from the distance looked like a vast and brilliant checker-board. Ages ago the people in Chichmany had tired of the dismalness of the mud in the street and the smoke-blackened ceilings and walls in their homes. Because they had had no chimneys in their stoves, the smoke would pour into the living-room and there was nothing they could do to brighten the inside of their homes. The smoke would quickly smudge any decoration. But it never touched the outside of their houses; wind and rain might beat on it, but paint could endure the lashings of weather for a long time. To cheer their own souls they set about decorating their houses on the outside with broad bands of white paint, criss-

crossing them diagonally so as to form large and neat geometric figures. One of them started it, the rest followed. Nowhere else in Slovakia—so I was told at Turcansky Svatymartin—did peasants decorate their houses with similar figures and in a similar fashion. This was a Chichmany invention or perhaps someone there had borrowed the original idea elsewhere and developed and popularized it in Chichmany.

I passed the blocks of houses which after the fire of 1923 had been rebuilt with money furnished by the Prague Government, on the condition that they preserve the local style of architecture. Neither the muddy streets nor the overcast skies could dim their brightness or their gaiety, and I couldn't keep reflecting that only a people with cheer in their souls could invent so lively and joyous a style of decoration. It could be seen from a long distance, and even in the dark the white figures like stars in a moonless sky winked a merry welcome to the passer-by.

I went to the newly-built schoolhouse. The principal showed me the woodwork of the boys. Out of gnarled little limbs, out of bushes nibbled off by cows, out of the bulbous roots of wind-torn saplings, these Chichmany boys from six to twelve had fashioned with their own skilful hands, with a knife as their only implement, an array of striking objects. The principal spread them on a large table, and my eyes roved in sheer wonder from one object to another—dogs, snakes, deer, lizards, giraffes, antelopes, gas masks, agricultural implements, human beings.

"They can carve almost anything they see," said the principal, "and they love to do it just for the fun they get out of it. Nobody ever teaches it to them, just as nobody teaches our little girls the art of embroidery. They watch their mothers and sisters, and they do it just for fun. Yes, our children here have extraordinary gifts."

What seemed especially extraordinary was the amount of expression these Slovak boys had put into their carved objects.

We went into a classroom and I glanced at the children, the boys on one side of the room, the girls on the other. They looked clean, well fed, happy, some of the girls in embroidered costumes, others in simple handmade dresses, and nearly all of them—the boys and the girls—well shod—Batya's contribution to the civiliza-

ation of Czechoslovak villages. There was a conspicuous number of blondes among them, with soft flaxen hair now and then falling in braids over a girl's shoulder. They sang songs for me, and it was obvious they loved singing. They sang more than a dozen of their village tunes, all from memory, and yet showed neither fatigue nor boredom. They would have gone on singing, only the bell rang and they had to go home—some to do chores around the house and barn, others to take a cow or a sheep to the pasture on the mountains.

As I watched them go out of the schoolhouse I couldn't help thinking that those of them who would remain in the village could look forward to no life of ease and affluence; the severe climate and the pathetic parcelling out of the land precluded either. Yet they would always have their songs to soften the harshness of Nature and the travail of man. Their ancestors had bequeathed to them a priceless heritage, of which neither Nature nor man could ever deprive them.

I went for a walk with the principal of the school and his wife. We sauntered from street to street, house to house, calling on people in their homes, talking to them in courtyards and in barns . . . The mud everywhere was deep and heavy, and now and then to escape it we performed little acrobatic feats, which furnished immediate amusement, but also emphasized the harshness of the struggle for a livelihood in Chichmany. The courtyards were disorderly, with manure piles and heaps of firewood scattered near the houses. The dark cow stables with only one or two small windows, the wet and foetid pigsties—because straw couldn't be spared for bedding and not enough dry leaves could be hauled from the woods—testified eloquently to backward methods of farming, and to impoverishment. We visited the girl who was the "mother" of her eight little brothers and sisters and it seemed incredible that a girl of only fifteen should acquit herself with such ease and neatness of the immense task that devolved on her—and in her household the pigsty adjoined the bedroom, with only a wall separating the one from the other.

Yet the people seemed poised and cheerful. They spoke of their hard life and their poverty, but they neither cursed nor mourned

their fate. They were kind to their children—seldom beat them—and respected each other's possessions and each other's persons. Some twenty-five years ago an insane woman had killed her husband with an axe, but since then there had been no crimes, hardly even any petty theft. Now and then there were irregularities in sex life, but that, too, created little disturbance, except to the kindly Father on the hilltop, and even he would not go into the subject with a stranger; he confined himself to regretting that the stalwart morality of two centuries ago had weakened.

Of course, if a wife knew of her husband's illicit affair with another woman she could call on her brothers and sisters to avenge the insult, and together with them she would scheme to lure the guilty "little sister" into her home where she would punish her. But instances of such recrimination were rare, because married men didn't often make a practice of indulging in sex irregularities, and when they did, they managed to conceal it from their wives.

People in Chichmany preferred calm to tumult, serenity to bitterness. Here was none of the tragic heartbreak, the brutality, the "idiocy" of which Tchehov and Ivan Bunin have written with such passion and torment in their stories of the Russian village. Here the middle-aged women with their broad and smiling faces were a joy to the eye and to the soul. Deep in muck in a courtyard, piling freshly-trimmed brush for firewood, they waved their hands and only jested about the mud and the discomfort it caused. The cheerful word seemed as natural to them as the hearty laugh: their faces, windswept and sun-scorched, radiated good humour and gaiety: their souls seemed as impervious to despair and desperation as the very mountains on which they gazed whenever they ventured outdoors.

## Chapter XII

### THE SOUL OF A PEOPLE

A PEASANT had come to Chichmany with a wagon-load of plums. He stopped at the base of the hill on which stood Father Shtrbe's home and church. The Father himself came down in his careless attire and bought a basketful. Others rushed to the wagon too and bought plums for immediate eating, for preserves, perhaps for home-made brandy. They were large purple juicy plums. One of the teachers bought a bagful and invited the principal, his wife and me to eat them. We stood in the street in front of the school-house and ate and praised their flavour and joked about the mud, and talked. We tried to explain how a great folk art grew up in a community that had for centuries been tucked away in the mountains.

"I have travelled widely in Slavic villages," I said. "I've never been in any that had as rich and original a folk art as this village. Perhaps the Slovak peasantry is artistically the most gifted of all the Slav peasantries in the world."

"We're getting too much civilization now," said one of the teachers.

"Do you think," I said, "it will kill the impulse for original art?"

"When the mud goes," remarked the principal's wife, "the embroideries will also go."

"That's the truth," said one of the teachers. "The men here no longer wear costumes, except the very old men."

"But the songs will remain," the principal thought.

"I'm wondering if they'll all remain?" I said.

"Oh yes," said the principal with confidence.

"The Matitsa in Turcansky Svatymartin is collecting them," I said.

"And I am also collecting them," said the principal.

"They'll be preserved on the printed page anyway," I said.

"But perhaps no new songs will come out of the mountains," said the principal's wife with a note of regret.

"By the way," asked the principal, "I wonder what's happening in Nuremberg to-day?" It was September 13th.

I looked at the principal, somewhat puzzled. Nuremberg? What had that citadel of Nazidom, and the convention of the Nazi Party, and the threats and passions that boomed out of there, to do with this mountain village, these singing, laughing, toiling Slovak peasants. What had all this to do with us, still eating sweet and juicy plums and speculating on the future of the art of this village? Nuremberg was an intrusion—a shadow that threatened to shut out the lighted path we had been pursuing. Yet once evoked it couldn't be conjured away.

"I wonder what Hitler said," remarked the principal's wife.

"The papers will arrive soon," said the principal.

"But perhaps nothing as bad as was expected," I remarked. "If he had threatened war, you'd have known it. The reserves would have been called up."

We talked calmly and freely with no sense of impending disaster or even discomfort. Nuremberg and all it symbolized at the moment was far away in distance and even more in spirit.

I went back to the inn and found a notary sitting at a table with a carafe of wine before him.

"Have a drink," he said. I sat down. He filled my glass and said apologetically:

"This is not wine."

"It's good," I said after tasting it, "but I warn you, I know no more about wines than about Slovak astrology."

"But I do, and I love good wine. We used to have it in the old days." He was real Hungarian with discrimination above all in wines. We sat and talked of the village, his life there, the accomplishments of his attractive daughter, and a lot of other things. Then I asked if he had heard anything about Hitler's speech in Nuremberg.

"Nothing especially exciting," he said indifferently.

"No threat of war?"

"Not as far as I know."

This was reassuring. I could stay on in Slovakia and explore

more villages and perhaps uncover further treasures of folk art among the engaging and talkative Slovak peasants. I would leave Chichmany and go to Betva, a village of which I had heard extraordinary accounts. These Slovak villages were unlike any I had known in any other Slav country : it seemed to me little had been written of their inner life in the English language. Here was poverty and squalor; a thousand years of Hungarian repression had left their imprint on the home life of the Slovak peasant; but here were also drama, lyric, joy, friendliness, good humour.

I walked outside and started in the direction of the blocks of houses which had been rebuilt, with Prague money, in the Chichmany style of architecture. The white geometric figures on the walls shone through the gathering dusk like patches of snow on a mountainside. Here and there smoke lazily crawled out of a chimney. As I passed the houses I heard children's laughter, the voices of adults. There was no quarrelling : I had heard no ugly language since my arrival in the village. I observed also, for the first time, that there were few dogs in the streets. Were the dogs as good-natured as their masters? I had more than one vivid recollection of encounters with dogs in Russian and Polish villages; here I hadn't even heard an infuriated bark. I was more enchanted than ever with this village, its ease, good humour, peace, dignity; the glamour which surrounded it in spite of mud, toil, meagre living.

No wonder there were so many centenarians in Slovakia! Fifty-nine of them, among a people of less than three million : forty-one women, and eighteen men, with two men and three women past their 110th birthday.

I went back to the inn. Near the doorway I met a young Czech electrician who was staying in the village. I had talked to him the previous evening, and now he was bursting with information.

"There are uprisings in the Sudetens," he said.

This was news. With the tension already generated by Henleinists and Nazis between Czechoslovakia and Germany such uprisings might precipitate very serious trouble.

"I heard people have been shot dead."

"Who told you?"

"I've just been in the city and heard about it."

"Sounds serious, doesn't it?"

"We aren't worried. We can lick the Germans."

"Alone?"

"We won't be alone. France and Russia will be with us, anyway."

Cool, confident, he spoke like all the Czechs I knew. "France and Russia will be with us!" The words had become part of the vocabulary and faith of the people, magic words, spelling invincible power. And why not? They had concluded military alliances with France and Russia. It wasn't the Czechs who were encroaching on Germany but Germany which was threatening to invade them. There couldn't possibly be any excuse for Russia and France to refuse assistance, if Germany launched an attack. Shopgirls in Zlin, young Sokols in Tabor, peasants in Moravia, workers, priests, school teachers, all had one supreme conviction, if war came they wouldn't be fighting Germany alone. Benes, one of the "professors," had surrounded himself with powerful allies. Still there were uprisings in the Sudetenland! Of course, it was only a report which a man had brought from the city. The village, far removed from the outside world, had no immediate sources of information. Yet such a report couldn't have been spun out of the imagination. I had to give up the idea of visiting Betva and other Slovak villages. I would hurry to Prague, if the storm blew over, I could go back to Slovakia and resume my wanderings.

I stepped off in Bratislava, capital of Slovakia. Here was none of the climatic severity of Chichmany, no rains, no overcast skies. The ancient, slovenly city was drenched with sunlight. The market-place gleamed with apples and pears, grapes and melons, blackberries and plums. But unlike the market-place in Tabor and other Czech cities I had seen, the attendants here were as unmindful of personal appearance as of their surroundings. Flies and bees buzzed about the stands, dust lay thick on fruits and vegetables. This was the East, unschooled as yet in the free use of broom and wash-cloth.

The Danube, no more blue than Mississippi or Volga, was alive with traffic. Across the bridge young Slovaks were playing tennis

or walking, the superbly-laid footpaths resounded with lively chatter and happy laughter. Nowhere was there a suggestion of anxiety or unrest. Later I met Professor Q. and he lifted the surface a little.

"Yes," he said, "there have been uprisings in the Sudetenland. I don't know the details. No doubt some people were killed. One town—Schwadenback—right on the border and part of it in Germany, has been seized by the Henleinists. They're holding it. We won't fight for it. We won't give Hitler a chance to say we started the war. But we are taking no chances. There's martial law in the disturbed areas and we are quietly mobilizing. A number of my friends have been called up."

"What do you think will happen?"

"Nobody knows. Something will develop to-day. Come let's have dinner. Afterwards we'll go up to my house and listen to the news broadcasts."

We had dinner, and then we went to the professor's house and listened to the radio. The British Premier was flying to Berchtesgaden to see Hitler.

"I told you something exciting would develop to-day," said the professor.

"What do you think it means?" I asked.

He ventured no opinion, but he didn't seem cheerful. Finally he said :

"Well, if we go to war, France and Russia will be with us, anyway."

Even he, scholar and administrator, a Slovak who has never merged his own or his people's destiny with the programme and aspirations of the Hlinka Party, leaned in a moment of danger on the military alliance with France and Russia. He too considered this alliance an impregnable rock.

I stayed another day in Bratislava, then left for Prague.

The train sped by fields, hills, forests, alive here and there in the bright sun with human effort. What was now in store for this little land in the heart of a central Europe which had always rocked with conflict and revenge? In climate, scenery, social aspiration, human composition, it was a land of stirring contrasts.

Here was Ruthenia with rugged geography, widespread poverty, tragic articulateness! Here was Slovakia with a heritage of repression, impassioned Hlinka intellectuals, a serene and hopeful peasantry; here were Zlin, Tabor, Prague, with their milder climate, their sweep of Westernism, their language of energy and fulfilment. What a welter of races, nationalities, religions! And here were the Czechoslovak professors—men of foresight, courage, drive, who appreciated equally yesterday and to-day, the book and the machine, the scholar and the soldier, the aim and the deed. Since the beginning of the Republic which they had founded, their one aim was to build a civilization in which ancient miseries and feuds would dissolve in a new freedom and comfort. In other European lands the intelligentsia had been proclaiming programmes, announcing dreams, losing itself in a flood of its own words and emotions. Not in Czechoslovakia, not these “professors!” They had subordinated rhetoric to an action which had transformed the land and slowly yet perceptibly the people within its fold. Jews and Christians, capital and labour, farmer and manufacturer, Slav and Teuton, men and women, age and youth—all were to emancipate themselves from ancient hostilities and be bound more and more by humane identities. The land reform! The fresh sweep of agricultural knowledge in the village; the school for all races and all nationalities in their own languages, from classical German to Biblical Hebrew! The libraries, the numerous expertly-operated state industries, the universal, iron-clad insurance laws for wage and salary-earner, the open beautiful public forests and parks, free to all; the medical services, cheap or free, reaching out to the most remote villages in faraway Ruthenia; above all the promulgation of a faith and tradition of tolerance and open-mindedness—all these were monuments to the energies and the humanitarianism of these unoratorical, unassuming, little-known Czechoslovakian professors!

Naturally, there were blemishes in the picture. There were the slums in Prague and Brno, as vile as any in the world; there were boxlike cottages at the mercy of hot sun and strong wind. No effort was made to conceal them. In the housing exhibition which the Government had sponsored they were exposed in all their

vileness. Nor did the Government fail to admonish the citizens for their failure to take advantage of liberal credits for housing which aimed to end gradually and effectually all slums.

There was a fierce chauvinism in the land among Czechs and even more among Slovaks. This too was held in check, partly by legal pressure, partly by education, partly by an effort to understand and, whenever possible, to mediate grievances.

There were overzealous bureaucrats in the state services who offended and angered the people. But they too were continually reminded of their shortcomings; the younger generation was educated in a fresh appreciation of tact in dealing with the masses.

Wages and salaries were low in terms of cash, and every crown counted. Yet food was abundant, not only from the home markets but from all the corners of the world. And food was cheap. The money of the country had rating in every part of the far-flung earth. The Czechs were sturdy people. It always roused one's appetite to sit beside them in a restaurant or in their homes, to watch them at their meals. They enjoyed food, plenty of it, food for the muscle and the energy which they gave unstintingly to their daily tasks. They loved work as much as they loved food. No other people in Central Europe enjoyed as comfortable a standard of living. You never heard among Czechoslovak housewives the talk you heard among housewives in Berlin; they never argued about how many eggs or how much butter they would be allowed for their ration. Nothing was rationed. There was plenty of everything especially meat and milk.

Yes, there were mistakes, but no one in authority concealed or minimized those mistakes. The Republic had begun life at a time of ruin and collapse, with anarchy and violence raging in many parts of Europe. It had inherited from the old Austro-Hungary not only a crippled industry and a thwarted agriculture but the social bitterness and the racial animosities which they had engendered and which their collapse had unleashed. The Republic was in existence only twenty years; since its very inception it had been on all sides subjected to the attacks and abuse of vindictive neighbours. And more, since the rise of Hitler it had been squeezing every crown out of its toil-loving people for guns and fortifications.

Still there was the record of its achievements—as luminous as the sun-drenched fields on which I was gazing out of the speeding train. In the light of these achievements, Czechoslovakia seemed to be more than state or nation. It was a civilization bright with deeds, brighter still with promise in this day of dictatorship and the repression of the human personality. Here, more than anywhere else in the world the social ills of mankind, the oldest and the gravest, seemed to yield to new treatment; this was a laboratory, a university in social thought, social action. Here, capitalism seemed to be tempered with a rich humanitarianism, democracy appeared to be seasoned with a rugged discipline, individualism leavened with a robust social responsibility. Left to itself as an independent nation, in spite of ugly pressures from without and errors from within, Czechoslovakia, through the instrumentality of her democracy, might yet perform the miracles of reconciling divergent racial and national groups in the one corner of the earth where they had always warred against one another.

Consider Benes' Christmas message in 1936.

"Our democratic regime can thus be more dynamic than any other regime. I know that not everything about it is perfect, and that there still are many social, political and national ills, with here and there actual want and distress. But our democracy is fired with the passionate urge to remedy these in the course of time. It is a democracy which is conscious that it stands in Central Europe like a lighthouse, high on a cliff with the waves crashing on it from all sides—a democracy that to-day in Europe has the mission, practical and symbolical, of keeping the flag of freedom, of peace and tolerance, flying in Central Europe, the flag of goodwill and of faith in political and social progress, a flag of faith in a mankind of greater strength and of a higher morality."

Again and again there were outcries against "the professors," and the civilization they were seeking to build. From the Left, from the Right there were excoriations and threats to enthrone in their place, by violence if necessary, other men who would root out tolerance and humanitarianism. But the people would not follow the apostles of obscurantism and they went down in disgrace. The "professors" had triumphed over all adversaries.

Now what? There was martial law in parts of the Sudetenland;

the German army was holding manœuvres within easy reach of the Czechoslovak border, and the Czechoslovak Government was quietly calling up reserves!

The "professors" had failed to achieve reconciliation with the Sudetens. The pressure from without—from Germany—was too overwhelming. The Prague Government had undertaken neither forcible nor resolute measures in answer to the terror of the Henleinists, the boycotts against Czechs, Jews and democrats, the constant demonstrations of defiance in public places and in the streets, the threats to Germans of a day of reckoning if they failed to rally round the banner of hostility to the Czechoslovak Republic; the continuous whispering campaigns that the "Fuehrer" was coming and then it would be too late to repent.

On my arrival in Czechoslovakia, Wenceslas Jacksch, leader of the German Social Democrats, had invited a Swedish journalist, a Norwegian, and myself to lunch. Jacksch gave us a lucid and brilliant exposition of the condition among the Germans in the Sudetens. We asked him how his Party and the Czechoslovak Government hoped to overcome the terror of the Henleinists merely with words of supplication and measures of leniency. He admitted that neither the words nor the measures had been resolute and effective. But he insisted that if the Czechoslovak Government would solve the economic difficulties in the Sudetenland, then, perhaps with a loan from England and America, the people could be won away from Henlein.

Here was one problem where neither the brilliance, nor the energy, nor the humanitarianism of the "professors" had availed. Would the Republic and the civilization it had nurtured smash itself against the harsh realities of this one problem? Concession and mediation had broken down. What then?

A Czech, of course, would say, "France and Russia will be with us."

*Part Two*

D O O M

## Chapter XIII

SEPTEMBER 16 (FRIDAY)

PRAGUE was like a stream on a breezy day with little ripples rising and falling across its surface. Small groups of people clustered around news-stands and newspaper offices, but they broke up as easily as they formed. There was no visible excitement in the streets, no show of panic or ill-temper: no urge on the part of the citizenry to engage in controversy, or to exchange opinions. They only wanted to know the news; they eagerly bought newspapers or stopped to glance at the ever-changing bulletins in front of newspaper offices. Events followed each other with lightning rapidity. The British Premier had already been at Berchtesgaden and spoken to Hitler. Henlein had broken off negotiations with Lord Runciman and ordered his followers to defend themselves with all weapons at their disposal against "Marxist attacks." The Czech Government issued an order for the surrender of all arms, even by professional hunters or by people with hunting licenses. Henlein had come out with a demand for secession. All the Henleinist offices and clubs had been closed by the police; Henleinist publications, documents, account books had been confiscated. The Czechs had carried martial law into ever-widening areas in the Sudetenlands. Henlein had fled across the border; at Eger a warrant had been issued for his arrest. The Sudeten Party had been outlawed. Now what? That was what Czechs wanted to know; that was why they gathered and dispersed readily in front of news bulletins or the freshly-printed editions of newspapers.

Outwardly they were as tranquil as the sun-drenched trees on the Watslevsky-Namesti. Only the hotel stirred with restlessness, and it wasn't Czechs but foreigners who had gathered there—newspaper men from all over the world. They had come in anticipation of epochal events.

"I guess there's going to be trouble in our country," said the red-haired elevator man.

"What makes you think so?" I asked.

"Mr. Knickerbocker is here."

He meant, H. R. Knickerbocker, of Dallas, Texas, known to porters, elevator men and diplomats in all the capitals of Europe. His friends call him "Knick"; so do diplomats in moments when they forget, or feel they do not need to remember, their dignity. I had known Knickerbocker in Russia; had taken trips with him to collective farms and villages. Never had I met a man who more readily identified himself with the event, the person, the crowd of the moment. He can eat black bread and cabbage-soup with as much zest as any *muzhik*—if he has to; he would rather order a meal which a king might envy. For more than ten years he had been flying to all corners of the earth to report world-shaking events. In the days before Hitler, and for a short time afterwards, he was the most widely-read foreign author in Germany. His name had become a household word and a subject of puns in leading Berlin cabarets. Now he is not permitted to cross German territory. Red-headed, pale-faced, with a melodious voice and a hearty laugh, he easily stands out in any gathering; once seen or heard he is remembered for the vividness of his person and his uncorrupted Southern accent. These days, when he comes to a city even hotel servants ask themselves whether their country is on the brink of war, revolution or something equally epochal and catastrophic.

"Mr. Knickerbocker," said the elevator man again as he let me off on my floor, "comes to our country only when we are in trouble."

"Do you think your country is in serious trouble now?"

"Yes, lots of trouble; even Mr. Runciman is afraid to stay here. He's flying back to London to-day."

"Is he?"

"Yes; that's what the foreign gentlemen of the press have told me."

Mr. Knickerbocker had come; Lord Runciman had gone; evil omens.

In contrast to the Czechs, the American and British newspaper-men I met were in a disheartened mood; the British even more

poignantly than the Americans. Runciman, they insisted, had only confused and weakened the Czechs diplomatically and made it easy for Henlein, advised by Hitler, to retreat further and further from the spirit of conciliation; Henlein had been inspired to sabotage the proceedings and the very intent of the Mission. Now the mask was off; Henlein had demanded secession, all because Runciman and the people who had thought of sending him, and whose point of view he represented, never even bothered to tell themselves that the conflict between Czechoslovakia and Germany was not over rights or wrongs of minorities, but over the rights and the wrongs of the very independence of Czechoslovakia. Hitler had gone too far now to retreat into any compromise, unless England, with all the support she could mobilize in the world, physical and moral, lifted her hand and said to him: "No, you cannot smash the independence of this little democracy so that you may have an open road to the realization of your wild dreams of world conquest." But the British Premier was not the man to speak to Hitler in his own language—the language of the drill sergeant. The trustful Czechs were "in for the bloodiest disappointment of their lives," according to the British and the American "gentlemen of the press."

To me, fresh from my wanderings through the countryside and innoculated as I was with the sturdy optimism of the Czechs and Slovaks whom I had met, the sceptical reflections of my fellow correspondents seemed alien and incredible. But the French and Scandinavian correspondents agreed with their American and British colleagues. They too saw no deliverance for the Czechs unless a miracle happened, unless the British Prime Minister told the German dictator that if he risked war, Germany would find herself fighting not only Czechoslovakia but an alliance of powerful nations. Was this a futile hope? Most of the French and Scandinavian correspondents thought so and cited, in support of their opinion, Mr. Chamberlain's utterance at an official interview with American correspondents in May, 1938, that war on account of Czechoslovakia was not in the interests of the British people. Surely Hitler had heard of this interview, and would therefore be master of the conversations between the two men. Then it would

depend on whether or not the Czechs would have enough outside support to defy British pressure, and if necessary also French pressure.

Yet to me the pessimism of my colleagues might be more justified than my optimism, if the situation were considered solely in terms of international forensics and intrigue. In terms of the responses and resolution of the Czechoslovak people it scarcely merited serious reflection.

So I turned from politics to the more cheerful discussions of the men who had come to Prague to cover the story. From Fodor of the *Chicago Daily News* I learned that Knickerbocker and John Whitaker, also of the *Chicago Daily News*, had gone to Carlsbad.

"Knickerbocker telephoned this morning that Germans in Carlsbad were expecting Hitler to march into the city to-night."

"But that would mean war?" I said.

"That's why I don't believe the story," replied Fodor. "But this is a mad world; it's just no use saying this or that won't happen because it sounds fantastic."

"I'll go to Carlsbad," I said, "and perhaps I, too, will see the Reichswehr march in."

"Or watch Czech and Russian bombs try to hit the hotel in which you are staying," someone said.

I started for Carlsbad.

The train was almost empty. I walked through the coaches; only now and then was there a passenger, usually a soldier, in the compartments. Even the third-class coaches were mostly vacant. A spirit of tension and gloom brooded over the train. After all we were leaving for a city which was under martial law.

There was another passenger in my compartment, a thin-faced well-dressed man of about forty, with a shiny brown brief-case in his lap. He had neither suitcase nor any other luggage; I thought uneasy thoughts about him. Was he Czech or German? If German, a Henleinist or a democrat? Or was he only a tourist on his way to Carlsbad to sip nauseating mineral water through a glass tube in one of the city's watering places? In any event, would it be safe to leave my suitcase even under lock and key and go to the restaurant car for tea and food? All my manuscripts and notebooks were in the suitcase; and if he was a person with professional

curiosity in his fellow-passengers, he might, in my absence, pounce on it and help himself to papers which were of more use to me than they ever could be to any one else. It was strange how easily I succumbed to distrust. Never before in all my journeyings in the country had I experienced a similar feeling. But Prague was full of tales about the far-flung spy system of the Henleinist organization, particularly among foreign journalists, and I *was* on my way to a city which had been a hotbed of Henleinist intrigue. To make sure I could tell whether my suitcase had been opened, I tied it in a certain way with a strap to my typewriter. Then I left for the restaurant car.

There were more attendants than customers in the car. The menu was as varied as in normal times and the car was as neat and orderly as always. I ate hurriedly and returned to my compartment. On entering I saw that my typewriter and suitcase were exactly as I had left them. The strap had been untouched and I reproached myself for yielding so readily to suspicion, even in such a troubled moment.

"Goin' to Carlsbad?" said the man in my compartment. He spoke Czech with a thick accent.

"Yes," I said. There was nothing in his appearance to give me a clue as to his identity. He too it seemed found the tension unbearable, so he started to talk about his troubles. He was a German, married to a Czech woman. His home was in Carlsbad, and he worked in Prague for a firm with headquarters in Carlsbad. He always went home week-ends. This might be his last trip home; or he might be shut off there for months, years, for ever. Such an insane world; he didn't know what to make of it. If war came, Carlsbad would be levelled to the ground, hardly a person in it would be left alive. The civilian population would launch into a war of its own, more sanguinary than the fighting of regular troops. Czechs and Germans who were Democrats, Socialists or Communists, would battle it out with the Henleinists; everybody knew that both sides had hidden arsenals in or outside of the city. Yes, there would be a double war, at the front and in the rear; by the time it was finished Carlsbad would be a heap of smouldering embers and rotting corpses. Madness, wasn't it? What was he to do? He had a home in Carlsbad; all his savings

had gone into it and much of his wife's inheritance; they had two children; they all loved their home. Suppose Hitler came to the city; what would my fellow-traveller do—he a German Democrat, married to a Czech woman, with children who spoke Czech better than German, and with the Henleinists never able to collect a crown of tribute from him or obtain his moral support for their insurgent parades? He was a marked man and on the black list; what would happen to him and his family? If there was real danger of war he would move his family to Prague; if Carlsbad became German he might lose his job, the Czechs might even expel him from Prague—and his whole life would be ruined. It was terrible for a German in Czechoslovakia not to be a Henleinist, and even worse to be one—too terrible for words. He kept opening and shutting both hands over the handle of his brief-case. I had no words of consolation to offer him and we were silent the rest of the journey.

We reached Carlsbad. From the window of the train the station looked empty and gloomy. Only two porters came to meet the passengers and so most of us carried our own baggage. Passing through the waiting-room I saw two Czech policemen, with rifles and fixed bayonets, lead a little man in a cap and rumpled suit into an inner room. They disappeared behind a door and I saw no more of them. Soldiers, with rifles and fixed bayonets, were at the out-going door. They scrutinized each passenger as he came out and said nothing. They didn't even trouble to examine anyone's baggage for weapons. I had not expected such leniency on the part of guardians of order in a city under martial law.

There was only one taxi at the station, no more were allowed, and five of us crowded inside. One of the passengers was a tall, handsome officer in a naval uniform, who was the acme of courtesy. He helped an elderly woman with her baggage and got into the taxi only after all the others had been seated.

Off we started. The streets were in semi-darkness; only some of the lights were burning, and not a soul was in sight. This might have been an abandoned city or a remote village; all life seemed to be snuffed out of it.

Suddenly, as we crossed the bridge, a light wavered, and our car

stopped. A policeman, and a very tall soldier in a steel helmet came over and turned their flashlights on us. The soldier peered into our faces and his own was full of distrust and resentment. But he said nothing. The policeman signalled our driver to go ahead.

In the heart of the city too, the streets were deserted—no vehicles, not a taxi in sight; no pedestrians, not even a dog. All curtains were drawn; there was no sign of life anywhere. We drove in silence.

At last about nine in the evening, we reached my hotel. The lights inside were hidden from the street. A porter unlocked the door and took my baggage. When we were inside he locked the door again. I asked if Knickerbocker and Whitaker were there.

"They've driven back to Prague," said the porter. I looked around the lobby, which, at one end, was lost in darkness. Not a soul was around. I glanced at the porter and his two assistants in their neat uniforms; they seemed like ghosts—pale, cheerless, silent. None of them could remember when the hotel lobby, even towards the end of the tourist season, looked so empty and so desolate. I wished they would speak—anything if only to break the tomblike silence of the room. But they only stood there at the desk, morose, wordless.

"Isn't there anybody here?" I said a little impatiently. "Not a single foreign journalist?"

"I am here," came an unfamiliar voice in English from the dark lobby. Out of the shadows there came towards me a tall, lean, handsome young man. He was immaculately dressed.

"My name is D——. I am a Swede—a journalist. I know Knickerbocker and Whitaker. They left only a short time ago. They said they might be back in the morning."

I felt better and came to myself. I realized that in my dismay at the surrounding gloom, I had neglected to register. There was the head porter, still holding the registration blank out to me with one hand and a pen with the other. I registered. The porter showed me into my room and the Swedish journalist came in to sit and talk. I asked him about the story of Hitler's plan to march into Carlsbad during the night.

"If Knickerbocker and Whitaker have gone to Prague, it means  
W.L.A. ◦

nobody's going to march into the city to-night," he answered. "But people here are nervous, and naturally the wildest stories gain currency. Nothing's going to happen until Chamberlain goes back to see Hitler." In daytime he said Carlsbad looked normal; in the evening people were forbidden to be on the streets; the empty city gave you a creepy feeling. But even a journalist got over this feeling after one night in the city.

As we were talking, we heard the rumble of a car. I looked out of the window. It was a closed bus, with all the lights out.

"People fleeing from the city," explained the Swede. "Czechs, German Democrats and Jews sending away their families."

"Many of them?"

"Yes, quite a lot." Then, without a word of warning,<sup>\*</sup> he launched into a bitter tirade against the democracies. He began with America, and so unexpected was his outburst that for some time I listened in silence. "Such a selfish country, fat with comfort, hot with righteousness. Imagine them making a picture like '*Big Parade*'—so untrue and so wicked. In Belgium people were so furious they hissed it. Telling the world that she won the War when she only made money out of it—lots of money."

I tried to say something, but he swept on torrentially. "And England, too! A land of merchants, shopkeepers, decrepit and fat, with no fire in their blood, ruled by doddering old men, who want to hold on to their money and to the old ways of running the world, and always in their own interests . . . And France! a slimy country—corrupt and rotten inside—with no conscience for anybody, not even for herself! . . . But look at Italy and Germany—with their old men brushed aside, their youth out in front—a youth full of energy, fire, self-sacrifice for a national cause. What a marvellous youth! And the English shopkeepers and French politicians are barring its way——"

"You don't sound like any of the Swedes I've ever known," I said.

"Don't think I'm a Hitlerite," he said, a little more quietly. "I believe in Democracy, if it's the right kind, if it permits youth and courage to win against age and complacency."

He became excited again and opened a fresh attack against America, England and France. I didn't interrupt, it would have

been useless. I listened to the handsome young Swede, a University man, widely travelled, an accomplished linguist, sending news to the journals of his highly-civilized country and obviously engulfed in the new frenzy that was storming across the Continent. As he left, he said earnestly:

"Don't think I'm a Fascist, I am not. I am only for youth and courage, for the will to fight and die in a national cause."

"The will to fight and die." Memorable words!

It was past midnight when I turned out the light in my room. Sleep failed to come. I looked out of the window. Carlsbad! I remembered that Czar Alexander III had visited it, and Turgeniev. Kings and writers, artists, bankers, princes, and charlatans had gone there, sometimes for their health, sometimes to start or to consummate national and international conspiracies. A city of doom or promise; which was it to be now? The streets were silent and gloomy; the stars, that glittered through the haze with niggardly brightness, held in them more darkness than light, more threat than promise.

## Chapter XIV

SEPTEMBER 17 (SATURDAY)

THE dining-room of the hotel, white, trim, enormous, was almost empty. The Swede and I were the only guests except for an elderly red-faced man—a tourist who would rather sip his daily portion of mineral water through the curved glass tube than seek safety beyond the menaced frontiers. Outnumbering the customers, the waiters were there in full force. Clean-shaven, with white collars, starched shirts and frockcoats neatly brushed, they seemed more like attendants in a funeral parlour than servants in a luxurious world-famous hotel. Anxiety and gloom marred their faces and neither their polite speech nor their polite manner could conceal their inward anguish. Nor were they long in keeping it to themselves. One question was like a spark that set off an explosion. They had had an abominable summer. The conflict between Henleinists and their opponents had given Carlsbad the reputation of a cheap and brawling beer hall. Not only Czechs, but foreigners stayed away. Winter would soon be upon them and they had accumulated no reserves of food or money. What would they and their families do? Besides—what would become of Carlsbad, now that fighting armies were massing all around? The head waiter, a bony, red-faced man with a long chin, speaking with a tremor as though he were seeking to suppress great wrath or grief, swept on brokenly:

"We want no war—that is, those of us who were in the last War and know what it is like. If it comes, Carlsbad will turn overnight into a heap of cinders—hotels, homes, bridges, parks, everything will fall to pieces and burn. Not even a stump will remain, and there'll be so much throat-cutting on every street and in every house that nobody'll be left alive. Who wants war? Only the young fools who don't know what it is. But those of us who're in the forties—we had four years of it—I did—my colleagues here did—we know that nobody won, not even the Allies. Everybody

lost; we all still feel our losses. Every day we feel them. We're like prisoners now—we can't move; and when we do we carry a pocketful of papers to permit us to breathe. It wasn't like that in the old days. Even waiters could travel, and some of us did, and we could take all the money we wanted and spend it as we pleased. But now, at every few steps, you must show a passport, and if you haven't the proper visas you are sent back, and you can get only enough money to pay for the bus ride to the hotel. Yes, that's how bad it is. We are bottled up, all of us: Germans, Czechs, Henleinists, Democrats, Jews; and not only in this country and in Germany. We're like cattle, tied to a stanchion, only cattle are well taken care of—they get enough to eat and are kept warm—and we, with Carlsbad a place of fighting, we—ach!—what's the use of talking! We don't want war. We hate the very thought of it."

I listened with the deepest interest. This hotel was reputed to be a nest of Henleinism; newspapermen stopped there because it was a source of Henleinist news. If this was the mood of the Germans, then Henlein or no Henlein, Hitler or no Hitler, these people, even if they hated the Czechs, were in mortal dread of war.

"So you wouldn't welcome war?" I asked.

"Fools, idiots, madmen—only they want war. Not those of us who have seen war. Nobody wins in a war."

The man who waited on me, as well-groomed as the other, but more portly and with a withered face, said:

"You see how we are—outwardly calm because we have to wait on people, but inwardly we just boil. Sometimes we forget that we must remain outwardly calm. We're hoping for the best. There's nothing else for us to do. *Ja*. I had a chance to go to America after the War—but I was such a fool—fell in love and got married and stayed here. Such a fool!"

A beautiful dining-room, with white tablecloths, white napkins, shining silverware, red plush chairs, paintings on the wall, flowers in ornately-cut vases—as neat and cosy and ghostly as a funeral parlour.

The sun was out and warm; trees, rocks, hills, and river, were bathed in sunlight. Not a vestige had remained of the gloom of

the night before. The streets surged with life. Shops were open; men and women were busy buying and selling and looking after their daily needs and their daily obligations. Only the rows of huge dark limousines—the taxis of the town—and the drivers beside them, alone and dispirited, gave the town an aspect of dejection. There were no tourists, no customers for taxis.

Only four days earlier the city shook with cries and deeds of defiance. The rebellion in Eger land had swept over it with the fury of a tornado. Now not a sign of it had remained. Nowhere was there a Nazi flag, a picture of Hitler or Henlein, or any other Nazi chieftain. Nowhere did I see a single swastika. Nobody sported around in knee-high leather boots or in low shoes and white socks—the official costume of the Henleinist. There were young people in the streets wearing blue shirts, red ties, khaki knickers, but they were the Social Democratic youth out in special force, distributing the new proclamation of Jaksch, their leader, calling on Germans to remain true to their faith in peace, mediation, and goodwill towards their Slavic fellow-citizens. With their habitual thoroughness and competence, the Czech police and soldiery had swept the city clean of all symbols of Henleinist insurgency.

I sauntered into the mammoth indoor market-place. At every turn it heaved and gleamed with abundance such as I had not seen in the best food shops in Berlin during my visit there at the end of June. Booths and shelves were bursting with produce from nearby fields, from all over the world. Grapefruit and oranges, raisins and figs, mushrooms—heaps of them—freshly picked, with roots and tops neatly trimmed and ready to be laid into the cooking-pot. Beef and pork, tiers of dressed fat geese. Ducks and chickens and wild game; pots and cans and jars of honey; blackberries and cranberries and, in spite of the lateness in the season, deep-red and shimmering wild strawberries. Pot cheese and cottage cheese and Swiss cheese and Dutch cheese. Peasant butter and tea butter and cooking butter, and eggs, white and brown, neatly washed and laid out in rows to tempt the appetite of the bustling housewives. Cabbage and cauliflower, and spinach and carrots, beets and potatoes, and all the other common household vegetables in heaps and tiers on shelves, in baskets, in barrels, on the floor.

Breads, too, of all the varieties one care to choose, and fruits in season: apples, pears, grapes. Sausages, of course, hanging in shiny rolls or lying in swaths on top or inside freshly washed counters. Pastries fresh and sumptuous, with frosting, with silvery fuz, with shiny chocolate. Barrels of *sauerkraut*, barrels of soaked cucumbers; food for the rich, the poor, for all appetites and all caprices. And in spite of the constant turmoil, the martial law and the threat of war, the prices were reasonable. In English money, peasant butter was a shilling a pound, tea butter four-pence more, potatoes less than a halfpenny a pound, cottage cheese two pence a pound, eggs less than a penny apiece. The women behind the counters were mostly middle-aged, neat and friendly. All of them invoked the spirits of heaven and earth to spare them the agony and ferocity of war.

Masaryk Street was a dismal contrast to the market place with its abundance and friendliness. Here was a modern confectionery shop with the windows smashed, the doors shut. Farther down was a smart hosiery shop, its windows were also shattered, its doors locked. Still farther down was a grocery store (it was locked too), its awning was torn, its windows broken, the floor inside littered with papers, the counters heaped with boxes and bundles carelessly thrown together. A haberdashery with the glass cases outside empty and one of its windows cracked all the way across, as though someone had struck it with an iron bar. All these were mementos of the uprising that had swept the town after Hitler's Nuremberg speech a few days earlier. The owners of these shops had evidently fled from the city. I asked a policeman whether he knew what had become of them; and he shrugged his shoulders and said he didn't know. They were Jews mostly; Jews were hurriedly packing their belongings and leaving. As we were talking, two trucks passed by, one loaded with furniture and household goods, the other with children. "There," said the policeman; "these are Jews and Democrats, sending their families out of town."

The Socialists were carrying on with unabated energy. Young people, singly and in groups, in their outfits of blue shirts, red ties, and khaki shorts, were dashing in and out of their sombre brick building. I walked inside, into the editorial office of their

newspaper. A middle-aged man with handsome blue eyes and a mass of thick grey hair received me. He had a warm handshake and an affable manner. There was neither pathos nor anger in his expression. His voice was soft and hearty, as of a man who would please a visitor but would be resolute with himself.

"Well?" I asked, and waited for an answer. It came swiftly, in terse, unmistakable language:

"Men who believe in ideas must always be ready for martyrdom."

A brief answer and loaded with meaning, not too hopeful, yet not unheroic.

"I want to believe," he went on, "that England really means to defend Czechoslovakia. My heart wouldn't allow me to believe otherwise, but my mind—that's another story—it never ceases to whisper misgivings." After a reflective pause he went on: "This time I hope the heart and not the mind will prove the real prophet, for it's the prophecy of the heart that I long to see fulfilled."

I had no questions to ask him. He had anticipated and answered many of them in the few words he had spoken. I wanted to leave. Anything else the man might say would be an anticlimax, and I was therefore glad when he said:

"There's nothing we here can tell you—I mean we leaders of the Party—that would give you much enlightenment. We know so little; but you ought to talk to people who have already felt the whip of the evildoer on their flesh. Go to them, they're in our refugee camp on Chodau—hundreds of them, all Germans, with more and warmer German blood in them than a Henlein or a Hitler ever can have."

So I went to Chodau.

The railroad station at Chodau is some distance away from the town. The path I followed wound past piles of *debris*, broken fences, untilled lands, barren meadows. This display of neglect prepared me for the slovenly appearance of the town. There were trees in the streets, here and there a lawn, lacking the shape and lustre of devoted care. The pavements were cracked, the smaller streets were without sidewalks. The houses on the main avenue and on other streets spoke of poverty or indifference; many of

them were so ancient that the walls sagged and the windows dropped low like the chins of very old people. There was none of the diligence and solicitude which from my personal experience with Germans, especially on American farms, I had come to associate with the very word German.

At the farther end of the town, past a clear gurgling creek, I came to an inn and stopped for lunch. Flies buzzed in and out of the open windows; the curtain was dotted with brown fly spots. Here, too, there was no tidiness, none of the sparkle of the Czech inn in Tabor, Zlin, Blahotnitze. A plump young woman, with a flushed face and large blue eyes, was on her knees scrubbing the floor with a hard brush. Quickly she arose and served me lunch. As I was eating I heard children's voices in the courtyard, loud, gay, incessant.

"Who are those children?" I asked.

"Refugees," answered the woman. "We have put them in the ballroom."

After lunch I walked into the "ballroom." Only the strips of decorative paper strung diagonally across the room, perhaps on the occasion of a village festival, reminded the visitor of the gaiety with which it might at one time have resounded. Now the straw on the floor, the men, women and children sitting or lying on it with their bundles and boxes all about them, spoke only too eloquently of panic and misery. I introduced myself as an American writer; instantly I was surrounded by careworn, unkempt men and women; the children in the courtyard also ran in and clustered about me. Everybody started talking; a few women started to cry. The presence of a man from the outside—a man who might inform the world of their plight, opened wide their hearts, surcharged now with grief and anger. One woman, with a baby in her arms, started to talk but quickly turned away to calm the baby; when words didn't help, she unbuttoned her blouse and gave it her fat unwashed breast. Many were talking at once, one louder than the other, in an effort to make himself heard. I was at a loss; I heard many voices but few words, suddenly a tall burly man appeared, with a thick moustache and a severe expression. He called on everybody to stop talking. He was evidently their chosen leader, for his words

established silence. It became so quiet that I could hear some distance away the subdued sobbing of a woman who lay curled up on the straw with a folded coat under her head. The tall man bristled with suspicion. He turned to me and said, in a firm voice:

"You've got to show us your credentials. We can't talk to everybody, it's dangerous." The people around us nodded agreement. I pulled out a handful of papers—my American passport, my calling card, Czech letters from the Foreign Office in Prague. The man examined my papers but remained distrustful.

"You must understand," he said, "it's a matter of life and death. We fled from Graslitz in the night." All around men and women nodded emphatically as though to impress me with the ordeal which they had experienced in their nocturnal flight from their homes.

"We're on the black list," added another man, and his words were greeted by more nods from the crowd.

"Some of us," went on the leader in a softer voice, but no less firmly, "are marked for the concentration camp and for worse things."

"For death," interjected a shrunken man with an unshaved face. Again the people nodded; some began to whisper.

"Yes, even for death," went on the leader. "Maybe you're an American writer, and maybe—" He stopped as though afraid to put his suspicion into words.

"Quite right," several voices broke in.

"Quite right," I said, and got up to go.

"Go up to headquarters in the office of the co-operatives," said the leader. "Let them talk to you or come with you here."

"I'll take you to the office," said a young girl with large spectacles; she was leaning on the arm of a boy in khaki knickers. Both were about sixteen years of age. "I live here," said the girl as we went outdoors. "My father works in the office of the co-operatives." We walked on together, surrounded by a crowd of eager, silent refugee children.

"They're frightened," said the girl, "terribly frightened because Graslitz isn't far from here and there's no telling what the Henleinists might do to them in revenge."

"Oh, no," broke in the boy, "they won't dare come here. There are too many Czech gendarmes to protect us."

"How do the young people in the town get along?" I turned to the girl. "I mean the Democrats and the Henleinists?"

"Not too well. Until their *putsch* the other day the Henleinists wouldn't speak to us. Now they greet us when we meet. But they don't like us. In school we quarrel all the time. One of my friends ran away from home because his father joined the Henleinists and wanted him to join too."

"Are there a lot of family quarrels?"

"Plenty, when the families are divided."

"You're all Germans in this town?"

"Nearly all."

"Would a young man who was a Henleinist marry a girl who was a Social Democrat?"

"I wouldn't marry a Henleinist, and I don't know of any of my girl friends who would," answered the girl.

"Never!" broke in the boy. "And why should they? They would only be fighting all the time, and people can do that without getting married." He and the girl laughed.

Chodau is an old industrial town with a population of 6000, nearly all Germans. The economic backbone of the town is its factories: two make porcelain; one manufactures machines, a fourth makes glass. There is a coal mine and a few other small enterprises. Four-fifths of the population are industrial workers. In the last elections two-thirds of the citizens had swung over to the Henleinists, though at one time nearly all the proletarians were Socialists and Communists.

On Monday, September 12, after Hitler's speech in Nuremberg, Henleinists had gathered in the streets shouting: "*Ein Reich, ein Volk, ein Fuehrer!*" (One state, one people, one leader), and "*Heil, Hitler!*" The shouts were followed by the chanting of "*Deutschland ueber Alles*" and the "*Horst Wessel*" song. They sang with enthusiasm and defiance. Whenever they saw an emblem or insignia of the Social Democrats they pounced on it and tore it down. Czech and German road signs they pulled up and destroyed. Then the Henleinists broke up and went home or to the cafés. At two in the morning they were supposed to gather again but only about eighty persons came, and they dispersed.

The next day, Tuesday the 13th, the Henleinists launched a whispering campaign. The message, electrifying Fascists, alarming Democrats, was brief enough :

*"Der Fuehrer kommt heute."* (The leader is coming to-day.)

Such whispers had been floated before, but never had they stirred so much emotion as now. At 11.45 the factory sirens blew, a quarter of an hour earlier than usual. Why? Nobody could tell. But it meant something—and it demonstrated once more the power of the Henleinists in the factories. The manufacturers had to do as they were told; they had to sound the sirens and dismiss the workers a quarter of an hour earlier. At one o'clock the Henleinists gathered in the streets. The mayor was in their midst, so were the *ordners*—the Henleinist local chiefs. Together they marched to the post office and told one Czech postmaster that he was dismissed. The three German assistants at once took charge of the place and appointed a new postmaster. There was nobody to stop them. The Democrats in the town were too weak to halt the usurpation of power. Only the Czech in charge of the telephone service had managed to lock himself in his booth and refused to turn his keys or his job over to the Henleinists.

The march on the Burger Schule was accompanied by a sinister incident. The janitor, a German Social Democrat, offered resistance; a revolver was pointed at him. He raised the window and shouted for help to friends in the street. Once more the revolver was brandished at him. Frightened, he ran away and hid in a cellar. From there he ran up into a bedroom. He threw himself on the bed, and covered himself with blankets. The Henleinists chased after him; his heavy breathing betrayed him. They fired and the bullet hit a notebook in his inside pocket. He was wounded, but pretended to be dead. The ruse failed. The Henleinists pounced on him and beat him unconscious. Then they dragged him outside, threw him into a car and drove off to the hospital. They carried him inside and threw him so violently on a bed that two of its legs broke. The *ordner* in charge of the pursuing party said to the doctor : "If this swine remains alive we'll come back and beat the hell out of him." The doctor was a Henleinist, but he was also a man with feeling of obligation to his calling. To save the battered school janitor he sent him off to the hospital in Pilsen.

Meanwhile the Henleinist effort to seize control of the town was gaining momentum. The engraved sign over the post office was battered down. The memorial in front of the cinema house was smashed. The lime tree planted in honour of Masaryk was torn up by the roots.

A retired schoolmaster drawing a pension from the Czechoslovak Government led the Henleinist assault on the Czech emblems in the schools. He went about pulling them out of drawers and throwing them to others to be destroyed. The bust of Masaryk was broken. From one end of the school building to the other voices shouted, "*Heil, Hitler!*" Hitler might come any minute—here was a schoolhouse purged of every vestige of Czech influence.

Elsewhere in the town the *putsch* was also making rapid headway. One Henleinist group seized the leading streets, including the one which led to the railway; they searched every person who came along. One Czech school principal whom they searched had a revolver in his possession; they took it away. He protested that he had a permit to carry arms, but they only beat him until he reeled away in agony. The delivery wagon of the Consumers' Co-operative drove by. The Henleinists stopped it. The inscription "*Consum Genossenschaft*" they crossed out with tar; over it they painted a huge swastika. The two passengers happened to be Social Democrats. One of them escaped, the other was beaten. The town hall had passed into the hands of the Henleinists and a huge Nazi banner flew from its roof.

But what of the *gendarmerie*? Here was a nucleus of Czech military force; unless it was wiped out, it might venture to dispute with arms the usurpation of power. The mayor went to their office and asked for the chief to come down. When he did the mayor informed him he was under arrest and ordered him to surrender his arms. The *gendarme* chief quickly shut the door and turned the key on the inside. The Henleinists were furious; they brought a hose and turned it on the *gendarmerie*. They would drown out the one enemy who might wreak vengeance on them—unless, of course, the Fuehrer did come. The water smashed the windows, but the *gendarmes* remained safe inside, they refrained from firing; they were under orders to resist all provocation and not to shoot.

The town had practically passed into the hands of the Henleinists

and there was widespread Nazi jubilation over the victory. But the Czech who had remained in control of the telephone service finally communicated with a nearby military post. Soon a truck came along with ten soldiers. They drove into the market-place and fired in the air as a signal for the crowds to disperse. The Henleinists fired at the soldiers, and that was how one street battle started. One Henleinist was killed and two were wounded; twenty-seven Henleinists, including the mayor of the town, were finally put under arrest.

This was the story of the *putsch* in Chodau which followed Hitler's Nuremberg speech. All over the so-called Egerland there were similar attempted uprisings and with the exception of the town of Schwadenbach, part of which was in German territory, they were everywhere quickly put down. The Czechs restored order and remained in control of the territory.

The office of the Consumers' Co-operative in which I was sitting reeked with smoke. The handful of men in charge of it were not jubilant over the Czech victory. Hitler had suffered a smashing defeat. Henlein had fled, so had thousands of his leading subordinates. Others were in Czech jails. The Henleinist Party had been outlawed; the Henleinist press had ceased to function; the whole Henleinist movement had collapsed: their flags, badges, emblems, uniforms, had disappeared. The Czechs were masters in the Sudetenland. Any notion Henlein or Hitler might have had that the Czechs would be caught unawares, and wouldn't suppress the insurrection lest it bring on a war, was now utterly exploded. The Czechs acted with decision, even when, as in Eger, machine guns had been turned on them, and their *gendarmes* were mowed down. But—

What would happen next? Hitler couldn't endure the defeat the Czechs had inflicted on him in the Sudetenland. He would need to do something violent and decisive to retrieve his prestige. If he did become master of the Sudetenland the supporters of the Republic would be among the first victims of his vengeance. The men in this room could look forward to the concentration camp, or to the execution block where the man in the frock coat with the

glinting knife in his hands would chop off their heads. They were calm and joked about their fate, and puffed incessantly at thin cheap cigars but inwardly they were sad and were prepared for persecution and martyrdom.

A young man with stiff light-brown hair and two front teeth missing, so that syllables and words got lost in his breath, took me to a second refugee camp. Here, too, men and women lay or sat around on straw laid out on the floor. Why had they fled from Graslitz? One after another hurried to answer the question. They were only five kilometres from the border. On the day of the *putsch*, the 13th of September, the Henleinists had flung themselves all over the town. On banners they had inscribed the words :

“We’ve conquered without blood, and now we’re  
part of Germany.”

They all believed Hitler would march in that very day, or the next day. The whispering campaign had assured them of that. And so workers and officials who had stood out against the terror and against Henleinism were panic-stricken. Late in the night they took their families and fled. They were afraid of following the main highway; they might be pursued and intercepted. So they took a path across fields and hills. They hardly knew the direction in which they were going. Again and again they got lost. The night was dark and it was difficult to make out familiar landmarks. The sleepy children were crying. One woman fainted and had to be carried the rest of the way. Another woman with a pair of newly born twins, wept all the time. Other women wept too. But there was no turning back; the Henleinists had told them they would pay dearly for their recalcitrance when Hitler came—and they were expecting Hitler’s arrival that very night! There was nothing for them to do but to flee as fast and as far as they could. That was how and why they came to Chodau.

“I suppose all these people are Germans?” I asked.

“Every one of them.”

“And Christians?”

“Yes, Roman Catholics; except, of course, a few who are Free Thinkers, just a few.”

"And they're all workers?"

"Yes, factory workers; just a few school teachers and officials."

"But mostly proletarians?"

"The vast majority real proletarians."

"And Aryans?"

"And Aryans."

"And the Henleinists in their home town are also, of course, Germans?"

"They have to be, you know."

"And Christians?"

"Yes, Roman Catholics, except the few who are Free Thinkers."

"And Aryans?"

"Yes, Aryans."

"And proletarians like these people?"

"Yes, the vast majority of them are proletarians, just like the refugees or the people here in Chodau."

So it was a case of Germans who were Aryans, Roman Catholics and proletarians *against* Germans who were Aryans, Roman Catholics and proletarians!

I returned to Carlsbad. The streets were as quiet and deserted and gloomy as the night before—no traffic, no pedestrians. Here and there a sliver of light flickered out of an incompletely drawn curtain or drapery. Curfew was in full force, and the people were constrained to stay indoors and keep to themselves their fears and hopes, their frustrations and desperations!

## Chapter XV

SEPTEMBER 18 (SUNDAY)

VINCENT SHEEAN had come to town the evening before with his wife and with Halton of the *Toronto Daily Star*. They were going off to the border and invited me to come along. First we went to Eger, where the *putsch* had ended in a battle with tanks and machine-guns. Policemen had blocked off the streets on which the fighting had taken place, but we were allowed to walk along the block and look at the Hotel Victoria and the Hotel Wenzel, which had been the scene of the battle. Now, both were empty and under guard.

"Hauptstell der Sudeten deutsche Partei S P" read the legend in printed white letters over the first floor of the now devastated Victoria Hotel. The doors were smashed, the windows on the ground floor were shattered. The police had been informed that inside the Victoria and the Wenzel were stores of arms. They had come to investigate and were met by volleys of shots. With a tank and hand-grenades they routed the Henleinists and took possession of the Victoria.

At the Wenzel the police were met by machine-gun fire from the cellar. Six policemen were killed. But the Czechs fought on and soon captured the place. The Henleinists fled through an underground tunnel which they had dug and of which the police were ignorant. They caught one Henleinist and imprisoned him. Now both hotels were deserted and the scars of battle showed in broken brick and shattered glass.

Here, too, not only Henlein, but Hitler had suffered a devastating defeat. It had been so in Austria too. The *putsch* there had failed, though it cost Chancellor Dolfuss his life. Hitler waited for a chance to avenge the defeat. In March, 1938, he swooped down on Austria and made it part of the Reich.

What would happen in the Sudetenland now? Hitler's defeat here, if allowed to go unavenged, might have disastrous conse-

quences, and it was the second time that the Czechs had inflicted it on him. On May 21st the Czechs had mobilized and the mobilization appeared to the world as a decisive victory over Hitler. Now it was much worse. Henlein and thousands of his subordinates had been routed out of power and had fled from Czech territory; the Nazi movement was outlawed and from day to day it was being more and more discredited. Never since the day of his rise to power had Hitler suffered such a setback.

We started for Asch. Vincent Sheean was driving. We had heard that bullets were flying over the roads which we were to travel, but we decided to see as much of the borderlands as we could. We wanted to know how much shooting there actually was in these much-talked of frontier "junglelands."

"If bullets come flying," said Sheean, "I'll step on the gas and just go. That's the only thing to do when you're in a shooting match between rival armies. Just go like hell."

We drove through Asch. The town was deserted.

"Have they all fled from here?" Sheean asked.

"Perhaps they have only gone to church," said Halton.

"Or have come back and are having their Sunday dinner," said Mrs. Sheean.

We drove through Franzesbad, with its palatial resorts and its grandiose parks. Here, too, the streets were deserted. We drove on, and finally struck a rutty dirt road which led to the German border. We had come near the place where there had been serious shooting the night before.

"Remember what I told you," said Sheean, "the moment I hear a bullet I'll just step on the gas and go like hell."

"O.K.," all of us said at once.

We reached a cross-road at which three Czech soldiers with rifles were lying in the grass. We stopped to talk to them. Yes, the night before there had been trouble at Henhaus near Asch. Germans from the Reich had come over and thrown hand grenades at Czech customs officials. Three Czechs had been wounded. But we could go on to Rossbach with absolute safety. Rossbach was almost on the border.

We started over a road which was an endless series of ruts and

hollows. On first sight Rossbach, too, appeared to be deserted. We drove through street after street, and nowhere was there a soul in sight. The absence of people stirred a little tension in us, but we drove on, eyes open for the sight of a human face, ears strained for the sound of a human voice. Finally through an open window on the second floor of a house we saw a woman making a bed. This made us all feel better; some people had remained in the town after all. When we got to the public square we saw more people, especially young men and women.

We stopped at the inn for sandwiches and beer. Round a table in the centre of the room sat a group of young Germans, with glasses of beer before them. One of them had a particularly severe and sinister scowl. Sheean was the first to call our attention to him. We took turns in stealing glances at him, and the more we saw of the scowl the more terrifying it became. Then another man came in, a giant of a man, with enormous legs and arms. He greeted the people at the table with a Nazi salute. The young German's scowl and the formidable stature of the man who had just entered seemed to us an indication of ill nature and of force with which to assert it.

Our sandwiches were slow in coming. I went to the kitchen to find out why. The man there assured me it always took time to make sandwiches in Rossbach; I need not be impatient; he would soon bring them. On my return to the table we discussed the tragedy of a conflict between two peoples like the Czechs and the Sudeten Germans. They had lived side by side for about a thousand years; they had always intermingled in culture and in marriage. Czech names were common among Germans, and German names among Czechs.

"Here is Jacksch," I said, "leader of the Sudeten Social Democratic Party. His surname is Czech and his Christian name is Wenceslas, also Czech."

"Look here," interrupted Sheean, "the man with the scowl is doing some extra scowling now."

"Yes, they're looking at you," said Mrs. Sheean.

"The Nazis don't love Jacksch, of course," added Halton.

Suddenly the giant with the formidable legs stood up and walked out to look at our automobile.

"I hope he does nothing to the car," said Sheean.

I looked out of the window. A small crowd of men and boys had gathered round the automobile and were looking at it, talking about it, admiring it. No one, however, touched it. Presently the big man returned. "Ge Be," he said—the German for G B, the letters on Sheean's licence plate, meaning "Great Britain." The announcement seemed to reassure the other Germans; they went on drinking beer and talking.

"If we don't get the sandwiches soon we ought to leave," Sheean said. "It would be no fun to be stuck in this town overnight."

"They might do something to the car, after all," said Mrs. Sheean. We looked again at the man with the fierce scowl and at the man with the big limbs. Neither conveyed any assurance of hospitality or an invitation to friendliness. "Yes, we had better leave," someone said. Just then the sandwiches came. One glance at them and we knew why it took the cook so long to make them. Each sandwich was a *delicatessen* counter, loaded with thick slices of a large assortment of sausages, and interlarded with rich dressing. We finished our beer, took the sandwiches with us and left the town.

We drove through Asch again. Now the main street was swarming with people. They must have been in church or, as Mrs. Sheean had suggested, at dinner when we passed through earlier in the day. Now and then someone would raise his arm in the Nazi salute and shout at us, "Heil, Hitler!" Once several children ran beside our car and shouted the Nazi greeting; once at a street corner a girl had done so. We drove on through town after town, village after village.

"I can't say that these Sudeten Germans," I said to Sheean, "at least, in the villages we have seen—compare with our Germans in Wisconsin or the German in New York State for whom I once worked. Look at their untidy courtyards, their manure piles near the houses, the slovenly way in which they take care of their implements, exactly as in Russian villages—and not so much now as before collectivization."

"Well, it's a German village," answered Sheean. "I've seen many of them in Germany and they look no different from these."

"And the ugly yellow paint on their houses and barns—so unattractive—nothing like the bright paints on the buildings of the German in New York State on whose farm I worked."

Of course the land here was poor; still, the habit of tidiness with which I had associated the word *German* was nowhere manifest. I couldn't help thinking how much more attractive were the Moravian villages I had visited with their uniformly whitewashed cottages, their hand-painted decorations on the walls, the gateways to their courtyards, shutting off from public view barns, manure piles, screeching hens and other livestock.

We reached Pilsen, the city of famous armaments and famous beer, and drove through the streets for a long time before we found a beer hall!

It was growing dark when we arrived in Prague. The city boomed with exciting news. The Czechs were stiffening not only against Hitler but against England and France. Lord Runciman's mission, with the heap of wreckage in its trail, had made the Czechs more than wary of the plans and ambitions of their allies. Unlike the British Prime Minister and the British press, which supported him and the Runciman mission, they clung stubbornly to their initial belief that their conflict with Germany was not a question of minority rights but of power politics and of the very existence of the Republic. They knew that with the natural frontiers and the network of fortifications gone and in the hands of Germany, they and their democracy and their industries, and the whole framework of their civilization with its immense humanitarianism would be at the mercy of their powerful neighbour, who was especially hostile to the tenets of their political faith, and to the economic power which their successful industrial enterprises had given them. Therefore they hastened to enlighten England and France and the whole world of their misgivings and of their resoluteness to maintain the territorial integrity of their country. Only a few days earlier Minister Bechyne, who was also Vice-President of the Government, in reply to an inquiry by the *Lidovy Noviny*, the most intellectual daily journal in the country, had said :

"A plebiscite is the surest road to war. In Czechoslovakia no

Government could accept a plebiscite, and if it did it would be quickly overthrown . . . an embittered people would rather die than mutilate their fatherland. Besides, a plebiscite will offer no solution, because about one million Germans will run from affected territory to the interior; we should have another German minority which would offer a fresh condition for a fresh Sudeten problem and thereby a fresh excuse for renewed pressure on the Czechoslovakian Republic, again and again, until its very destruction. Tell your readers to feel reassured on this point. There will be no international police in this State and no plebiscite. We have established order and we ourselves can maintain it. We shall prove to the world that we can achieve our programme of keeping up the equality and the rights of all minorities in the Republic. I beg the people to keep its confidence in the Government and in the Army."

The words "the Government" and "Army" were specially significant for the Czech citizen, whoever he might be. These were guarantees of imperishable independence. That afternoon, while we were driving through the quiet Sudetenland, Milan Hodza, the Czech Premier, spoke over the radio in a similar vein :

"Czechoslovakia," he said, "is experiencing the most serious crisis in her present-day history, a crisis that is shaking all Europe. . . . It isn't merely a question of peace . . . but of an honourable future and of the preservation of the integrity of the Republic . . . the whole of Europe knows that. . . . After we reached a mutually acceptable basis of negotiation . . . there was a dramatic reversal. . . . The suppression of insurrection is not persecution. . . . If in some places martial law is deemed unjustified it must be emphasized that it has resulted in a lessening of the harm that was done . . . it has proved itself warranted . . . and shall be continued as long as necessary."

Then, as if for the special benefit of the French Premier, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, the British Premier and the other members of his Cabinet who were at that very time in session with the French in London, Hodja said :

"The so-called plebiscite is, under no circumstances, offering a solution. Had it been a feasible method of solving the problem it would have been used by the Peace Conference. Viewed from whichever angle one chooses it is an unacceptable solution . . . we want peace and freedom . . . we need no strong words . . . we need strong hearts, and we have them."

In Prague, then, there was complete confidence in logic, in the rightness of the Czech-Slovak cause, in the possibility of holding together the country's territories and thereby, and only thereby, its independence.

Benes himself, uninvited to the Conference of the British and the French Ministers, hurried a letter to them by special plane! He informed them that his Government would not be responsible for any decision they might make without its opinion and its consent.

The Czech-Slovak Government did more than announce to the world its determination to uphold its territorial integrity. Firmly it was solidifying its powers for all eventualities. It proclaimed "a state of emergency" for the duration of three months—proof that it was expecting neither a speedy nor a happy solution of the conflict with Germany. This meant an encroachment on the civil liberties of the population—their inviolability of home, secrecy of correspondence, freedom of speech and press. Since mid-day all telegrams and cables in and out of the country had been censored. The porter at the hotel had informed foreign residents that all letters abroad had to be posted unsealed or they would be opened, anyway. The Czechs were busily preparing for all possible emergencies.

Meanwhile, the German press continued its attacks on the Czechs and on Czechoslovakia. It spoke of the President as "the criminal Benes." It charged that Czech ministers were hurrying deposits of money to Swiss banks—a sign of the crumbling of the Czech State, and its imminent dissolution. It raged about "Communist terror bands . . . shooting pregnant women . . . frenzy of Red mobs . . ." Parties of foreign, especially of American and British newspapermen had been scouring the Sudetenland in automobiles looking for the terror of which the German press and the German

radio were so loudly screaming. Not one Correspondent as far as I could learn, had ever been able to verify the stories which the Nazis were broadcasting. All the shootings had been initiated by Germans from over the border against officials and *gendarmes*, and had occurred on Czech territory. The Czechs didn't even bother to retake the town of Schwadenbach which Henleinists were holding because part of it was on German territory; they wanted no Czech bullets to cross the frontier.

German propaganda about the alleged reign of terror against defenceless Sudetens in Czechoslovakia kept on and on. That very day, Sunday, September the 18th, Henlein, who had already proclaimed for secession, announced :

"In the face of the Bolshevik and Hussite elements among the Czech people, the Prague Government is no longer master of its own country. Even at this moment Benes is fooling and cheating his people . . . He is too cowardly to admit the breakdown of his policy to Czech workers and farmers. He sees his last hope in European catastrophe . . . He lets loose Bolshevik Hussite mobs in uniform . . . hate-inspired . . . Czech soldiers against defenceless Sudeten Germans . . . Unspeakable suffering has fallen on the Sudeten German home . . . In taking up arms and forming the Sudeten German Free Corps we claim for ourselves the right of self-defence."

The *putsch* had failed. Now there would be armed uprisings and further clashes between organized Henleinists and Czechs. Hitler and Henlein were obviously planning to avenge the defeat they had suffered with the suppression of the *putsch* in Egerland.

The foreign correspondents, British as well as American, saw no triumph ahead for the Czechs. In word and deed, Hitler and Henlein were becoming more and more defiant, more and more violent; whereas Czechoslovakia's friends, the French and the British, were becoming only more concerned over the tension rising to a bursting-point between Czechoslovakia and Germany. Never before, in no other world crisis which I had witnessed had I known American and British newspapermen to be so uniformly of the same opinion; so apprehensive and cynical about the good

intentions of the French and British Cabinets. Here in Prague, among the newspapermen of both countries, despite difference in personal character and taste, there were friendliness and good fellowship, and an outstanding unanimity of opinion on the subject of Czechoslovakia's western friends and their attitude towards her at this moment of grave peril to her independence. The only exception was a British journalist who remained stubbornly inarticulate, and an American journalist who didn't care what happened to any nation or people that was in the way of power politics.

## Chapter XVI

SEPTEMBER 19 (MONDAY)

THE world might be trembling with anxiety over the possibility of war, but God was good to the Czechs—at least in Prague; the weather was superb, bright with sun and cool with the breeze that was blowing from surrounding hills. Knickerbocker and I were sitting on the sidewalk café of our hotel having breakfast. We talked of the possibility of bombs destroying the ancient city, at this moment so peaceful and cheerful. Though it was still forenoon, the Watslavsky Namesti was already swarming with pedestrians, neat, well-dressed, low-voiced, unmistakably Czech in appearance and in their highly disciplined behaviour. We watched them in silence and admiration, a confident people, a quiet people, a patient people.

How would they behave when they learned what had already become a certainty to us, though we had as yet received no official confirmation of it? What would they say when they discovered that the French and the British, in their joint sessions in London the previous day, had resolved on cutting away the Sudeten territories from Czechoslovakia? All of them—Government and people—had been on record as determined to resist to the end such a solution of their difficulties with Germany. But when faced with the actuality of such a decision on the part of their most powerful friends, what would they do? We wondered.

We went for a walk and stopped at an optician's. A tall, sturdy young man with flushed cheeks, a firm mouth and a low, soothing voice waited on us. He wore a neat white jacket, as do so many of the Czechs clerks. On learning that we were American journalists he asked us what we thought would happen now. We passed the question back to him. Quietly, resolutely he said :

“We'll never give up our historic lands. They never belonged to Germany. They've always been ours. Without them we shall again become vassals of Germany, and we've had enough of that

—three hundred years. We know what it means. We'll fight to the end."

"Suppose Benes yields?" Knickerbocker asked.

"Impossible—he can't. Our people won't stand for it." The mere prospect moved him so deeply that his voice shook.

Then he told us that he was likely to be summoned to service any hour; he would be happy to go.

We went back to our hotel and again sat out on the sidewalk and watched the bright procession of pedestrians. Presently we were joined by a Czech journalist. He rushed up to us and asked quickly:

"What do you think of the latest news?"

"It looks pretty bad for Czechoslovakia."

He waved reassuringly with his hand.

"If it's true, then we fight."

"But suppose Benes yields?"

"He cannot yield. There'll be demonstrations, protests. There'll be a people's war."

"Sure of it?"

"Absolutely! Soldiers in barracks are tense and are eager to go and fight. A high officer told me so. They think the Government is too mild—too polite—and therefore weak. Officers have to do a lot of talking nowadays to keep the soldiers from grumbling. And, by the way, a lot of reserves are being called. It looks as though the Government is preparing for a serious emergency. . . . So long—see you soon—unless I too am called." He dashed away.

"These Czechs aren't going to take it lying down," I said to Knickerbocker, "even if England and France tell them they must."

Knickerbocker shrugged his shoulders, doubtful.

Madame P. passed by the sidewalk café. I hadn't seen her since returning from my trip. A short, plump woman with reddish hair, a broad, open face and large blue eyes, she was always serene and smiling, and when she smiled she made me think of a happy and playful little girl who wants to say kind things to older people and wants them to say kind things to her. She spoke fluent English. I invited her to sit down for a cup of coffee, and asked her what she thought of the "novy plan" (new plan) which the latest editions of the newspapers were reporting.

Calmly, with a broad smile, and with her large blue eyes bluer and brighter with determination, she answered:

"We won't accept it. Impossible! We'd rather die."

"But if Benes tells you to accept it, you'll have no other alternative." I knew of Benes's supreme authority and prestige and knew also that Madame P. was a staunch supporter of the President.

"He won't dare. The people will be against it. It would mean the loss of our independence—of course it would, if we give up our God-made frontier and the fortifications we've built there." Then, while still smiling, her eyes grew shiny, and with a tragic nod she added: "We'll fight." Drawing close, she whispered, "I'm afraid it means war. A friend of mine, the wife of Minister K.'s secretary, called up this morning and said her husband wanted me to be sure and send my children to the country."

I felt convinced that the secretary of the Minister had received some information which had not been made public, which even the foreign journalists hadn't heard.

"Your friend's husband must expect war," I said.

"Yes, of course."

"Do you plan to send your children away?"

"No. I think it's better for all of us to remain in Prague. If anything happens—gas attacks or bombs—there are good doctors here and good hospitals. In the country we might be absolutely helpless. Besides, we have built a big bomb-proof cellar in our house. If you or any of your friends want to come and stay with us during air raids you'll be most welcome—we have lots of room. We also have a cottage in the country, a short distance from here, and we have built a bomb-proof cellar there too. We'll keep it open for any Americans who want to come."

"Thanks," I said. "It's certainly good to know there's a place we can run to in time of trouble. So you're confident Benes won't yield?"

"Of course. How could he? The people won't stand for it. And my friend's husband must have important inside information if he urged us to send our children to the country."

"You're a brave woman," I said.

"I'm only a Czech woman."

"Perhaps it's the same thing—Czechs have to be brave these days."

"At one time we fought against the whole of Europe for our freedom; if necessary we'll do it again." She glanced at her watch. "I must run off. Please excuse me. Come up for dinner—any time." She added, as she got up to go: "Have you got a gas mask?"

"No."

"You must get it at once—please—no telling what may happen."

"Have you got one?"

"I have, one for everybody in the family. I'll get one for you if you have any trouble in the stores. There's a big run on them everywhere. Good-bye."

Prague was bright with sunshine, but more and more people were carrying gas masks. They were reputed to be among the best in the world—still—gas masks!

I wandered in the streets. The people obviously had not the least inkling of what had taken place in London. In a beer hall, with a foaming Pilsener before me, I turned to my neighbour and engaged him in conversation. He was a little man, with a rolling abdomen, flushed cheeks and an expression of ease and contentment—the small business man who is never rich, but is sure of his income and, therefore, drinks his Pilsener regularly and with ease, indeed, according to a mathematical formula, based on the amount he can weekly spend on beer. I asked him whether he had heard of any decisions that were made in London.

"Not a word," he answered; and then added calmly: "What do we care what London and Paris decide? It's we Czechs who live here, and it's we who must say the final word."

"And what is your final word?"

"The historic lands remain ours, or we fight—all of us—to the last man and woman in the country." He took a large sip of Pilsener and sighed with contentment.

Every one with whom I spoke in hours of wandering about the city had the same answer to my question—they would fight to the last man for the territorial integrity of the country: they wouldn't again become vassals of Germany, as they had been for three

hundred years, from 1620 to 1919. Never again! Freedom or death was the universal and implacable resolve.

Then I ran into Annichka, whom I had met on a train in the Tatras. She was in her early twenties, a college graduate, and a teacher in a Prague school. With her dark wavy hair, her large blue eyes overhung by heavy brows, and her sunburned skin, she was one of the most attractive girls I had seen in Czechoslovakia. She was cheerful when I had last seen her, just as she was starting for a walk in the mountains with two other girls, a knapsack on her back and a stick in her hand. She was cheerful now.

We sat down in a café and talked. She told me of her experiences in the mountains, of the resorts and villages she had visited, of the fresh energies and courage she had gathered during the six weeks of rambling in the country. She seemed so happy that I deliberately refrained from discussing politics. But, in spite of her good humour, the subject was on her mind.

"What do you think will happen now?" she asked.

"What do *you* think will happen?"

"I'm already preparing to be a Red Cross nurse."

"Do you really expect war?"

She shrugged her shoulders. Then she said calmly:

"It's better to die than to live under Hitler. That's the way we Czechs feel." After a pause she added: "Of course some of our Agrarian leaders, who would rather sell their grain and cheese at high prices than preserve the independence of the country, would like to make up with Hitler and perhaps give him territory. Yes, there are some; but they're the exception. They won't dare come out in the open with their views. The people everywhere feel as I do—nothing is so precious as our independence."

I remained silent. There was nothing for me to say. Evidently my silence annoyed her, for she asked a little irritably:

"Don't you agree with me?"

"About what?"

"That nothing is so precious as independence, the independence of your country? If America's independence were menaced wouldn't you fight?"

"Sure, I would."

Suddenly she laughed.

"But maybe there won't be any war. After all, France and Russia will be with us."

In the light of the Anglo-French decisions of the previous day in London which had already been sent to Prague, I wondered whether the widespread trust of the Czechs in their military alliances was still justified? But again I said nothing. As we parted she said :

"Come over some evening. I've got a collection of new American records, and I'll play them for you."

"I will," I said, "provided you'll have dinner with me."

She laughed.

"I suppose you still think it's terrible to go out to dinner with a man?" I said.

Again she laughed, a light-hearted, joyous laugh.

"I'll invite you some day, and then we'll see what happens."

"Do come over," she said as we parted. And as I watched her swing around the corner I wondered what even she would say when she learned of the Anglo-French proposals.

Mr. De M., a French journalist, was sitting all alone at a table on the sidewalk, breezily quaffing a sherry. The evening before, I heard him speak with cynical good humour of Czechoslovakia, her allies, and on his own joys in life.

"Well?" I said.

"I've just been to the Foreign Office," he began. "They're terribly angry, all of them, and they talk only of one thing—war. Benes won't yield."

"How do you feel about it?"

"Don't you see how I feel about it? I'm drinking sherry, and it's good sherry. Have one? As long as I enjoy my wine, I still have hope at least for myself."

With much zest and with no sentiment, he had told us the evening before of the new girl he had met, and of the enthusiasm she had roused in him.

"Have you seen your new girl to-day?" I asked.

"I'm seeing her this afternoon—what a magnificent girl! I don't mind being in Prague now. It's quite pleasant."

"You're a happy man?" I said.

"Of course I am, and why not? I am only a little over thirty. I have lived. I'm living now. Here's my wine—and there's my new girl. If war comes and I have to go and get killed, I can at least say that I've known something of life and of the joys it affords. Here, waiter, bring another sherry. . . . Yes, sir, I'm over thirty, and I haven't put off enjoying life until old age. No man should."

## Chapter XVII

SEPTEMBER 20 (TUESDAY)

AGAIN a bright day, brighter than the day before, more sunny, yet cool, with the bluest of skies, unflecked by the least shadow of a cloud. It was good to watch such a pure and cheerful sky, for the earth in Prague was gathering gloom and with the passing of the hours the gloom was deepening.

The censorship was rigid! The Czech newspapers carried only vague reports of the Anglo-French proposal. But foreign journalists knew that the English and the French had long decided to settle the conflict by offering Hitler, not a plebiscite but a surrender of the Sudeten lands, the territories in which more than fifty per cent. of the people spoke the German language.

In Paris, Monsieur Bonnet, the French Foreign Minister, had sent for Osusky and broken the news to him. Osusky is a Slovak and therefore, perhaps, less hardened to emotional shock than a Czech might be. Never in his wildest dreams had he imagined that such a solution, involving the sacrifice of his country's independence, would be engineered by his country's friends. And to think of it, even by France, *the* foreign country most adored in Czechoslovakia. Every college student dreamed of the day when he could visit Paris, if only for a short time, and see with his own eyes the wonders and the glories of the French Republic. The art of France, its literature, oratory, history, its battles for the emancipation of the human personality, had inspired the Czechoslovak youth with a faith and a love for France which were only second to its faith and love for its own fatherland. Indeed, their fatherland had become what it was because ages ago valiant Frenchmen had gladly given their lives for the enthronement of certain conceptions of human individuality and human liberty. France was not a country but an ideal and an inspiration. And now this once heroic, freeminded and noble France, together with England, had decided to leave Czechoslovakia and its people to the mercy of the one man who had gone on record as demanding the destruction of its independence.

Tears streamed down Osusky's eyes: "My country," he said to Bonnet, "has been tried and condemned by a court which didn't even summon her to appear. One of the judges previously went to see Hitler and heard his evidence, but nobody heard ours. Yet one of the judges is a pledged ally, and we had hoped that the other was a powerful friend."

We read Osusky's moving words not in the Czech but in the British papers, which had arrived in the afternoon. I was with Knickerbocker and John Whitaker at the time.

"What do you say to that?" I asked. Whitaker merely said, "Gee!" There was more fury in that monosyllable than I had ever heard the genial and usually talkative correspondent pack into a stream of his most pungent rhetoric. Knickerbocker made no answer. After a pause he said:

"Waiter, bring us something to drink—what'll you have, John? And you, Maurice? I'll take a double whisky." And he turned to the street and stared at the procession on the sidewalks. Not a correspondent, American or British, but was as wroth and as gloomy as we were!

Prague had, as yet, made no answer. Benes and his colleagues had not yet spoken. I remembered the words of the fat little man in the beer hall the day before: "What do we care what London and Paris decide? It's we Czechs who live here, and its we who must say the final word."

If this was the sentiment of the people, what would Benes say in reply to the Anglo-French proposals? He was in no hurry with his answer. The son of a peasant, he had his share of peasant shrewdness and stubbornness, and the peasant's reluctance to part with something for nothing. Especially when that something was rightfully his. He had been a college professor, had risen to high eminence as a statesman, had had long association with French and British diplomats and knew their mentality and their way of doing things. He would therefore frame his answer in terms of their own idiom, so an official of the Foreign Office had said. That was why he and his colleagues were taking so much time coming to a decision and phrasing it properly. Nobody felt so infuriated with the delay as the Germans.

for such an appeal. At the time that Hitler had repudiated the Locarno Pact he had said that he would honour its subsidiary treaties, including the arbitration treaty with Czechoslovakia. On March 14th, 1938, the British Prime Minister had explained the situation to the House of Commons. He said that Marshal Goering, only three days earlier, on the day of Germany's occupation of Austria, had assured the Czech representative in Berlin that the German Government wished most earnestly to improve its relations with Czechoslovakia. Later that same day Goering had repeated this assurance to the Czech Minister in Hitler's name. That day, too, Baron Von Neurath, of the German Foreign Office, had given the Czech Minister further assurance that Germany would consider herself bound by the Locarno arbitration agreement of October, 1925. Germany, then, had twice proclaimed herself ready to fulfil the subsidiary obligations of the Locarno Pact, and to submit differences with Czechoslovakia to arbitration. Why, then, not call on her now to submit this conflict to arbitration, in accord with the spirit and the word of the Pact?

So Benes and his colleagues had reasoned; so they said in their formal reply to England and France.

"Germany," a Foreign Office official said to me, "should be the last Power in the world to object to our proposal, and the British Prime Minister, who had announced in the House of Commons on March 14th Germany's readiness to abide by the Locarno arbitration clauses, should be the last person in the world to inform us that these clauses are null and void."

"Has the British Premier told you these Locarno clauses were null and void?" I asked.

"Of course not; but—"

"But what?" I persisted.

"Well," he answered; "let's see what happens now." He avoided a direct answer to my question.

## Chapter XVIII

SEPTEMBER 21 (WEDNESDAY)

TOGETHER with other journalists, American and British, I stayed up most of the night in the lounge of the hotel where I was living. We drank, talked, joked and prophesied and were in utter ignorance of the stupendous drama that was, in those very hours, being enacted on the Hradchany, the castle in which the President of Czechoslovakia lived.

Usually only one man was on duty at the castle. In view of the accumulating tension, of the escape of Henlein to Germany, his formation of a Free Corps to challenge Czechoslovakia, and of the incessant and vitriolic propaganda against Benes in the German press and on the German radio, one more man, and only one more, was sent to guard the castle. No head of a government anywhere was more safe in his own country than was President Benes.

At two in the morning (Prague time) Mr. Newton, the British Minister, drove up to the castle. He was joined by M. de la Croix, the French Minister. They said they had come to see Benes. They were told that the President had already retired. They demanded that he be awakened. The demand sounded a little impudent and was at first met with resistance, but only for an instant. Benes was awakened. He received the British and French Ministers.

They told him they had come with urgent instructions from their Governments to demand a definite reply to their proposals. Yes or no? The French Minister informed Benes that if, in the event of a rejection, war broke out, France could not support Czechoslovakia. The British Minister emphasized that Great Britain would remain neutral. Benes hadn't expected such summary action on the part of one country with which he had concluded a military alliance, and on the part of another which, under the League of Nations Covenant, was duty bound to uphold the integrity of Czechoslovakia, and which, under the Kellogg Pact was under further obligation to support Benes in his demand for

international arbitration. But here the President was faced with a peremptory *ukase*: Do you accept, or do you reject, the Anglo-French proposals for handing Germany the Sudetenlands which are inhabited by a majority of German-speaking people? Yes or no?

Benes asked for time. He was told he couldn't have any. He had to act promptly because Paris and London were waiting for the reply. The Ministers insisted that he wake his colleagues and convoke a session of the Cabinet immediately. He said he would do so.

Half an hour later Milan Hodja, the Prime Minister, and five other Members of the Cabinet, met with Benes to discuss what they were to do. France was abandoning them: Great Britain was abandoning them: Hungary and Poland were crying out for territory and were ready to march with Hitler. Russia alone stood by: or perhaps Russia would withdraw from her obligations since these were based on the condition that she come to the military help of Czechoslovakia only if France did so.

For four hours Benes and his Ministers discussed the crisis which was so suddenly thrust upon them late in the night. On all sides of their 1400 mile frontier they would be subjected to fire—with only Rumania and about seventy-five or eighty-five miles of border friendly to her. What could they do? And they had no time to lose—not a minute. The British and the French Ministers were as blunt as they were peremptory.

Then followed another meeting of the twenty representatives of the Coalition parties which made up the Government.

What could they do? What would happen to them now? And the British and the French Ministers were pressing for an answer—Yes or No? If they said Yes, their independence was gone; if they said No, they would have to fight all alone, with Poland and Hungary joining Hitler in the fighting! That would be tantamount to committing suicide. Such folly Czechs had never committed: they were not in the mood to commit them now.

Professor Krofta, Minister of Foreign Affairs, communicated with Mr. Newton and M. de la Croix, the British and French Ministers in Prague. He informed them that his Government accepted the Anglo-French proposals.

Prague had been quiet all night. The people knew nothing of

what had been happening at the Hradchany; nor did the Foreign correspondents have any inkling as to the momentous visit of the British and the French Ministers to the Castle.

When we retired we were, for the most part, in doubt as to what the next move would be, and whether it would be Hitler or the Allies who would make it. We were agreed only on one thing: whoever made the move, and whatever it might be, it would be at the expense of Czechoslovakia.

On waking the next morning I went down to Knickerbocker's room. A number of correspondents had already assembled there, British and Americans.

"It's all over," said one man, turning to me.

"You mean the Czechs have accepted the Anglo-French proposals?"

"It was rammed down their throat and there was nothing they could do about it."

"We can still write an obituary," said one reporter.

"I guess that's what we had better do, all of us," remarked still another man.

"Write an obituary on the bravest democracy in the world!"

The correspondents were angry, and bitter.

I went down to the street and bought all the morning newspapers, in Czech and in German. Not a word of the drama and the tragedy at the Castle during the night! They still spoke in a spirit of defiance. The burden of their argument and their hope was still, "Czechoslovakia shall not be partitioned."

I walked through the city. More and more people were carrying gas-masks; more and more people were buying them. The shops which were selling gas-masks were jammed with customers. The drug stores were crowded; people were buying specially prepared first-aid kits. Whatever might happen they would be prepared in their homes for the worst possible emergencies.

I entered the Zlata Husa café. It was crowded with people sipping coffee, eating rolls and jam, reading with their usual calm the papers, which told them nothing. I was looking for a seat when someone called me in Czech. Turning, I saw at a corner

table the athletic young man from Brno whom I had met at a summer resort, the one who wouldn't accept the hospitality of a room to himself because his friend would take no money from him. He invited me to share the seat beside him and introduced me to his companion, a middle-aged Czech with a corkscrew moustache.

"How do you feel about it now?" I asked.

"Same as I did when I saw you this summer."

"Still hopeful your country can hold out against Hitler?"

"Absolutely."

"And if the Government gives in?"

"I am a Legionnaire," his companion broke in. "I was in Siberia—and if necessary every man, woman and child in this land will turn Legionnaire and fight to the last drop of blood."

"So you think the Government won't accept the French-British proposals?"

"Never! never! We won't stand for it. We'll overthrow the Government. We're the people and we count."

Several other clients at a nearby table turned and listened, and one of them said: "Benes won't dare; he knows what'll happen to him."

"That's the way you all feel?"

"Absolutely."

"There'll be a military dictatorship."

"General Sirovy will be dictator. The people will follow Sirovy."

Defiance and resolution, as strong now as at any time since my arrival.

"But if the British and the French say you won't get any help from them if you fight?" I asked again.

"The French won't say it; and if the French fight, the British will have to."

"Sure," said my friend. "I worked in France for two years; the French may be a little crazy but they have a sense of honour."

"Why would they have signed a pact with us if they didn't intend to keep it?" said the Legionnaire.

They were all of one mind here; no Government could survive capitulation—"the street," the people, would turn it out of power;

General Sirovy would become dictator and fulfill the will of the nation . . .

I left without telling them that their Government had already surrendered.

I went back to the hotel. As I was going up the elevator I said to the operator, the sandy-haired boy with the grey eyes and the voice of pious innocence:

"Have you heard the news?"

"What news?"

"Your Government has capitulated."

He stopped the elevator and stared at me with glassy eyes. I was sorry I had told him.

"Impossible!" he said. "Here are the papers." And he pointed to layers of the latest newspapers which he kept on the plush seat of the elevator for hotel guests. "There's not a word in any of them about capitulation—look; one of them even denies it!"

"Nevertheless, it's true," I said. "And all the 'gentlemen of the press' in this hotel have already sent the story to their papers. Every country in the world knows about it—except yours."

He started the elevator again.

"When the people find out about it," he said, "there'll be a revolution."

Later I went down to the street again. The weather was brilliant; the crowds on the Watslavsky were increasing. Shops were crowded, especially drug stores and food shops. Everybody seemed to be carrying bundles. No, they knew nothing of the capitulation, that was evident. They did not appear worried. They were only sensing the approach of an explosion, and they were preparing to meet it.

In the light of all this shopping and the robust self-confidence that shone out of the faces which I passed, I wondered what would happen when the news of the capitulation was released. I felt that the talk I had heard of protest and revolution was no idle fancy of rhetorical Czechs. The threats were freighted with resolution.

I stopped in a *vyche*p which sold beer, coffee, sandwiches and pastry. It was crowded with youngish people. They seemed to know each other; they sat together as at a meeting and talked with

great animation. They smoked incessantly. One of them, a young man of medium height with enormous shoulders, a large, beautifully shaped head crowned with heavy flaxen hair, kept repeating almost like the refrain of a song :

*“Bude valka, bude valka, musi byt valka.”* (War is coming, surely coming, must be coming.)

“*Ano, ano, ano,*” (Yes, yes, yes) nodded the young waitress in white. The young man scrutinized me keenly and asked, “What do you think?”

“I don’t know.”

“Are you a Henleinist?” His lips tightened and his eyes snapped with anger.

“I know him,” said the waitress. “He’s an American journalist.”

The young man was suspicious.

“Henleinist?”

I laughed and showed my passport. He looked at it carefully; the other people gathered about it and looked at it too. They nodded and smiled. The young man also began to smile; he shook my hand and said :

“Pardon, pardon, pardon! But these Henleinists . . . if war comes . . . well, there won’t be many of them left——”

“There ought not to be!” said the waitress.

“But what will you do if your Government decides to give Germany the Sudeten lands?”

The young man who had suspected me of being a Henleinist struck the table with his powerful fist.

“We’ll overthrow the Government!” he shouted. “We’ll put it in jail; we won’t tolerate any such treachery! . . .”

He was in a furious rage. The others were more calm, but their words were no less determined.

“The moment people hear Benes has given in, they’ll rush up the Hradchany and demand his resignation.”

“Sirovy will be in power.”

“There will be a military dictatorship and our generals are fighting men.”

“Damned right! They’ll tell Hitler a thing or two—and the British and the French too. We’re afraid of nobody.”

"We like our Democracy."

"We'll defend it."

"Fight for it; die for it."

"The French will stick by us," said the waitress in white.

"Of course they will! They are a nation of soldiers. Soldiers are not politicians; they're men of honour."

I left the beer hall and jumped into a taxi. I had to go to the radio station for my broadcast to America. It was exactly 2.40 in the afternoon.

"Have you heard anything?" I said to the taxi-driver. I had often driven with him around town, and always enjoyed discussing with him the events of the day.

"There's no news—except that the British and French must be crazy if they think we'll give up our historic Bohemian lands."

"I heard," I said, "that your Government has accepted the Anglo-French proposals."

"It can't be true." He turned and glared at me as though resenting the mere suggestion of capitulation. "I won't believe it," he went on. "No Czech Government would do that—couldn't; it would be overthrown." After a pause, he added: "If it's true, there'll be a revolution—a military dictatorship. No, we won't capitulate, you can be sure of that."

Inside the radio building I ran into P—, a hardy, big-boned youth, with his peasant origin written all over his broad, rugged face and his calm, penetrating blue eyes. Since the radio station always received news as soon as it happened, I asked him if he had heard about any new action by the Government.

"Nothing," he said, "since the note they sent to London, the gist of which was transmitted to America last night on your time."

Even here in the Government radio station they knew nothing—or said nothing—about the capitulation forced on Benes.

"Do you suppose," I said, "the government is likely to change its attitude?"

"If it does," he answered, "it'll be overthrown."

"That's what I heard a lot of Czechs say. Some people say Sirovy might become a military dictator."

"He might . . ."

On my return to the hotel I went to see Knickerbocker. Fodor was with him and Mrs. Sheean.

"What do you suppose the street is saying?" I said.

"What?"

"When the people find out what's happened there'll be a revolution."

"I don't think it likely," said Fodor, "these people are too well disciplined."

"They also say there'll be a military dictatorship."

"Perhaps," said Fodor, suddenly changing his mind. He had an extraordinary knowledge of Central Europe and his sudden reversal of opinion was a tribute to a situation in which events tumbled on each other with bewildering speed. No judgment could remain fixed.

"The street talks only of revolution in case the Cabinet capitulates," I said again.

"Of course the Czechs are a stubborn, fighting people," said Fodor. "Their whole history shows that."

The street drew me with irresistible power. I couldn't help feeling that Prague, and perhaps the whole world, was on the threshold of something momentous—an explosion the force of which might shake more than the castle, the city, the whole of Europe; and it would start in the street. The next word, the next move in this fantastic sweep of fact and fancy, guile and grief, would come from the pavements.

But for the moment the street was tranquil with self-confidence. Here was a Slovak woman bending over a basket filled to the brim with shiny little cheeses shaped like goose eggs. She was eating a ham sandwich. I remembered that I had not eaten all day myself. I went into a nearby *cafeteria* and bought two sandwiches and a plate of thick fish soup; and again I marvelled at the superb quality of the foods in the Prague *cafeterias* and their inordinate cheapness. I marvelled now more than ever, because the capitulation might soon change it all. The place was crowded with shoppers, who had come down the Watslavsky Namesti to provide themselves with the things they might need if war broke upon them.

Hearty workers, the Czechs are also hearty eaters. They are

physically one of the sturdiest people in the world; as I watched them now I had the feeling that they were also one of the most contented. Here was a girl, with long braids and a soft-skinned, flushed face, eating out of a small paper napkin a potato griddle-cake; she was trying hard not to laugh at something a boy was telling her. He was also eating a potato griddle-cake out of a small paper napkin. An elderly, grey-haired, hump-backed woman—in an old and frayed black hat was eating mashed potatoes richly seasoned with goose liver and brown gravy. Here was a mother with two children, both girls, eating pieces of *vanuchka* (cake); the mother telling one of the girls not to bite such big mouthfuls; the other girl asking if her mouthfuls were also too big.

Here was a people that still smelled of the soil. They might be manufacturers, financiers, school teachers, shop girls, artisans; but their rugged build, their hearty appetites, their deliberate manner, their feeling for reality, their frugality, their dislike of extravagance, their reserve, their simplicity, their magnificent appetites all testified to a quality and an outlook that were essentially peasant. They looked well fed—Czechs always do: more than any people I have ever known. They also looked well clothed: never elegant, nor slovenly. They seemed to have no grievance against God, man, or the cosmos; perhaps for that reason they seemed incapable of violent emotion or violent action. Here was a people with a love of the earthy joys of life, content with what they had: alien to the sophistications of the modern metropolis; a sturdy, toil-loving people, with meticulous regard for personal integrity and for the privacies—even the caprices of their neighbours; whose youth, even the boys and girls in their teens, seemed strangers to the levities, though not to the refinements of the so-called civilized world.

What would these people do when they learned of the fate in store for them?

I went out into the street again and mixed with the crowds. People were still busy buying things. Earnestness, tolerance, integrity shone out of their broad and rugged faces as vividly as their health. Perhaps now that they were on the threshold of catastrophe they would discover that they had been too earnest, too honest, too tolerant; that they might have been spared the ordeal and the catastrophe that was about to burst on them if they and their

leaders had shown more guile, more suspicion of the world about them, especially of their friends; and if, as a British writer had once said, they had had "the courage and the audacity to say, "No, no, no!" to Henlein, above all to Runciman, to Chamberlain, to Daladier, to all the other Englishmen and Frenchmen who had, suddenly, leaped before them and wrested from them control of their foreign policy, and therefore of their whole destiny.

I looked into every face I passed, wondering what expression would creep into it when its owner learned of the capitulation.

Three girls sauntered by, arm in arm: one bareheaded, two in tiny little hats, all animated, chattering, laughing, guardedly manoeuvring their way through the crowds so as not to lose each other, yet not to encroach on passers-by. I wondered what they would say and do when they learned that their country was to be amputated—not, as the Germans had been so wildly proclaiming to the world, for the sake of liberating a minority from thralldom, but as their own leaders and newspapers and radio, and their own fathers and mothers had been saying, for the purpose of depriving them of their natural defences and their military fortifications, and placing them at the mercy of a large, formidable, ruthless foe. A country of patriots, of fighters, of workers, what would they say and do when they learned of Krofta's communications to the French and British Ministers? This well-dressed man smoking a cigar with an expression of concern over something; this woman in a black dress, black hat and black veil, evidently in mourning; this portly man with his fat, flushed face, small blue eyes, talking quietly to the tall woman beside him, who seemed to agree with what he was saying, nodding and smiling at his words; this short woman, bent under a load of finely-cut firewood, walking with measured steps, with her eyes on the sidewalk and her face showing neither fatigue nor protest at the heavy labour she was doing; and all the others who were passing by—men, women, children: and the three little boys on the corner, each with a basket loaded with bunches of freshly-washed and gleaming red radishes. . . .

It was late in the afternoon. The city was still without knowledge of what had happened during the previous night. I

went to a news stand and asked if any of the afternoon papers were out. The attendant said :

"Not yet. Have you heard anything?"

I shook my head.

"It's a bad sign—very bad." His eyes reddened and he said : "Russia will be with us, anyway, and we're not afraid to die."

He was at least forty: big-boned, and usually cheerful. "Not afraid to die!" Now the words were no longer a slogan or a resolution!

Customer after customer came up and asked for an afternoon paper. He had the same reply for all of them: "Not yet out." Some of them lingered a minute and asked whether he knew the reason for the delay. To this he also had only one answer: "Censorship, I suppose."

"Listen," he said to me, "I've been thinking of becoming a Communist. It's no use being a democrat any more. See how England and France have been playing with us like a cat with a mouse? But Russia is with us, and I hope she remains with us; and if she doesn't, I'll curse the Communists to the end of my days. I'll want to beat them."

A tall, big-bodied woman with a friendly and gentle face came over and asked for an afternoon paper. The man only shrugged his shoulder. The woman shook her head in concern and walked on.

"There's something funny about this," said the newsdealer, "so late and no newspapers. It must be a bad sign. Nobody ever holds up good news. But we'll fight, and Russia will fight with us. Russia isn't capitalist: she's got a sense of honour." Then, with a sudden change of voice with a note of anger in it, he went on: "And if Russia also betrays us, I'll become a Fascist, I swear I will, and I'll beat hell out of the Communists. I mean it."

We finally received the announcement for which the Czechoslovak nation had been patiently waiting.

"The Czechoslovak Government has been forced under irresistible pressure from both the British and the French Governments to accept with pain the proposals worked out in London."

"Pressure from the British and the French Governments . . . proposals worked out in London!"

Their friends had done it! Their friends!

Would a revolution really break out?

Now that the people had heard the news they weren't long in making themselves heard. Exactly at 8.40 I heard cries on the Watslavsky Namesti. A procession was coming down; it was still on the sidewalk; a long procession of men and women, mostly young, shouting something which I couldn't hear. Off the sidewalks, following the curb, were young people waving their arms and shouting at the top of their voices for other citizens to join in the procession. Passers by eagerly responded. From minute to minute the procession swelled with fresh recruits. The very people who had been buying first-aid kits in preparation for war, were now flocking to voice their anger at the capitulation and the capitulators. Czech nerves had snapped; Czech reserve had broken down; Czech passion was now erupting like an earthquake in ever-mounting streams of lava.

I followed the procession, but was halted at a crossing by a policeman. I had seen him before; he was merciless with jaywalkers. I stopped. Traffic was heavy and the policeman was slow—or so it seemed to me at the moment—with the shouts only one block away and growing louder and more ominous. In the crowd on the sidewalk I heard a woman say to a man on whose arm she was leaning: "Why do you suppose they did it—our friends—the British and the French?"

"I think it's because they were afraid of revolution. If Germany was defeated she might go Bolshevik."

The woman, much younger than the man and well dressed, tightened her lips. Pointing to the procession she said:

"Maybe the revolution of which they were afraid is starting now. Maybe this is the beginning of the world revolution; maybe—"

I heard no more; the policeman halted the traffic; the street was open. I crossed it hurriedly and ran to join the procession. Most of the marchers were young people. There were more men than women, all well dressed. Few of the girls wore hats; they were as passionate in their shouts as the men, and they were all

yelling protests, slogans, demands in rhythmic unison, like American students at a football game. The words were clear now, full of resentment; they were loud enough for the whole world to hear:

“Long Live the Army!”  
 “Long Live General Sirovy!”  
 “The Army to Power!”

They would shout a slogan about a dozen times, in unison. Then someone would start another; instantly a chorus of voices would pick it up, fling it into the world:

“Chamberlain has sold us out!”  
 “The French have betrayed us!”  
 “Down with the English!”  
 “Down with the French!”

The procession moved off the sidewalks. Like a stream that had burst all bounds, it was spreading over all the lanes on the Watslavsky, until the street seemed flooded with people. On and on they marched, around and around, shouting defiance, demands, denunciations. Suddenly someone started the National Hymn. As if in obedience to an imperious command, all marching stopped. Men took off their hats everywhere, even in the windows of hotels and other buildings. Thousands of voices rose in the air:

*“Where is my home? Where is my home?  
 Where through meadows rush bubbling fountains,  
 And the forest murmurs stir through the mountains.  
 Orchards gay in Spring’s device,  
 Everywhere ’tis Paradise,  
 And this land so fair and beautiful  
 Is the Czech land: is my home:  
 Is the Czech land: is my home.”*

The whole street joined in the song, even the waiters and waitresses in the cafés. There was more than a pledge of loyalty and love in the singing; there was in it a plea, a prayer, perhaps

a curse; for some of the singers didn't merely sing—they forced their voices to the bursting point as though they were too full of anger to think only of singing . . .

When the song ended the shouting started again—louder, more fierce, more desperate:

“Chamberlain has sold us out!”  
“Down with the French!”  
“Long Live the Army!”  
“Long Live Sirovy!”  
“The Army to Power!”  
“The Army to Power!”

I walked beside a bareheaded youth with tousled hair and full lips. He had shouted so loudly that his face was red and his voice was growing hoarse.

“Are you a Czech?” I asked.

“No, I'm a Slovak.”

Since religion is important among Slovaks, I asked: “Lutheran or Catholic?”

“Catholic.”

“What do you think will happen?”

“The people will fight.”

“But Slovaks and Czechs have been quarrelling?”

“Now it's different——” He broke off, for someone shouted at the top of his voice:

“Chamberlain has sold us out!”

A multitude of voices cried out passionately:

“Chamberlain has sold us out! Chamberlain has sold us out!”

Then someone cried: “Shame on the French!” and the crowd roared out: “Shame on the French! Shame on the French!”

An elderly man shouted: “To the Castle!”

“Yes, to the Castle!”

“To Sirovy! To Sirovy!” cried the whole street.

Then someone else burst into song:

“Where is my home?  
Where is my home?”

And once more as before men took off their hats, all movement stopped, the strains resounded over the street full of pathos. Tears streamed down many of the faces of women and men; voices were so choked with sobs they could no longer carry the tune.

Earlier there had been an announcement of the capitulation on the radio. Among other things the announcement said:

"We stood before the danger of war which threatened the foundation . . . of our State . . . of national existence of the Czechs and the Slovaks . . . the President of the Republic jointly with the Government could do nothing else but accept the proposals of the two great Powers . . . Nothing else could be done because we were left to ourselves . . . the Government knows only too well and shares deeply the sentiments of the nation, its anxiety and exasperation . . . together with the people it will defend within the framework of our new condition the freedom of the Fatherland."

Then, as if in anticipation of an outburst of protest and rebellion, the announcement said:

"Farmers, Workers, Artisans, Officials, Soldiers! Remain in your places, at your work, go on with the performance of your duties. Remember that demonstrations, street parades, acts of violence, will not further your good. Through such action you will only hurt the State, which, face to face now with the antagonist, demands unity, endurance, firmness . . . the protection of all citizens is guaranteed . . . don't allow yourselves to be incited to unthinking acts by scoundrels and *provocateurs*."

This announcement failed to reassure or to soothe the grief-stricken, enraged citizens; it did not contain one word of abuse or reproach for the enemy who had threatened war or the friends who had supported the enemy. Other speeches followed; the most notable by Hugo Vavrechka, Minister without Portfolio. I had met Vavrechka on my arrival in the country. He was already in

the Cabinet, but he was also a director in the Batya enterprises. I wanted information from him about Zlin, the centre of the Batya enterprises. For some reason he seemed suspicious of my intentions, for he asked if I could let him have a copy of one of my books, so that he could tell what kind of a writer I was. I told him it wasn't customary for writers to offer copies of their books to the people they were interviewing. He changed his attitude and in the course of our long conversation he showed himself to be a man of simple habits, but with an extraordinary grasp of earthy realities, a practical man with a sharp eye for business, and also for the man at the shoeworker's bench. He was no dreamer or crusader, no Don Quixote; he was free of all Dostoievskian or Tolstoyan *weltschmertz*: a Slav with a keen feeling for the concrete things of life. I should never have suspected him capable of emotional upheavals. Yet here he was, addressing his people in the hour of their national calamity with noble and dignified pathos:

"Dear Citizens and Citizenesses! Throughout our history, our people have been struck by many wants and catastrophes. Terrible storms have often swept over our land, and laid it waste and starved to death hundreds of thousands of our people. Often it appeared that our people were rooted out and annihilated. Our history is written in blood, and one reads it with a sunken heart and with tears. Yet our people rose to their feet again and recuperated; and after years of want came a period of restoration; and the peasant and the artisan once more went back to their peaceful pursuits; and Art and Science again blossomed, and our people produced cultural fruits which proved the glory of future generations. In time of catastrophe the memories of its past were a source of strength to our people, and enabled it to survive the most difficult period of slavery.

"You've heard the official report of the descent of the great powers on our Government. You have heard that our allies and friends, in a method and manner unparalleled in history, have dictated to us as to a vanquished nation. But we aren't vanquished. If our Government, together with the President, finally felt compelled to decide on the acceptance of the hard terms presented to us, it did so out of a wish to save our people from futile sacrifice

and futile bloodshed. It wasn't weakness or lack of courage that prompted our leaders to the decisions which stabbed all of us straight through our hearts. The bravest of us are liable to find ourselves in circumstances in which honour and courage demand the avoidance of a reef which is in process of being felled by blind forces. In the eyes of God, it takes in certain moments more courage to live than to commit suicide. And in the eyes of God there are no honourable men in the world who have a right to say that we were intimidated and cowardly, when this afternoon we authorized our Minister of Foreign Affairs to inform Great Britain and France that for the sake of Europe's well-being we sacrifice ourselves, even as that great Saint, who was crowned with thorns and was hoisted on the Cross, offered Himself for the well-being of mankind.

"Dear Brothers, Sisters, Fathers, Mothers, Children! We shall not at this hour reproach those who have left us to ourselves without assistance. History will render its own verdict of them. It is our duty to look into the future and to bring together and unite and build up again our people who shall live . . . Henceforth we shall lean on our own powers. But it lies with you whether these powers shall lead us out of the darkness that now enfolds us and light up the beams of a new sunrise. Let us have faith in ourselves. We are not giving in; we shall preserve our land and our homes. In this new life, let us lift high our heads."

This speech enlightened and saddened the smitten people, but failed to console them. It only added to their grief and exasperation. Vavrechka's voice choked as he spoke, his listeners wept; but they would not yield to his spirit of resignation; they were like a man who without any real warning has become aware suddenly that he was to be led to the execution block. In his heart he felt he was innocent; he had done nobody any harm; he had lived in accordance with his own commands and God's commands. He had tilled his lands, foddered his stock, provided for his family, nurtured and loved his children, paid his taxes, obeyed the laws of his Government—rendered unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's and unto God the things that were God's. And suddenly he is told that he must die—and those whom he had brought into the world must be turned into serfs. Impossible! He only needed to wander out into the open, look at the sky,

at his lands, at his crops, at his wife and children, to assure himself that the announced sentence was no more than a grim joke, an invention. He would forget it—like an evil dream—and if it was a reality, he would refuse to mount the execution block; he would battle with the guards, the executioners, and all the powers that were behind them. No, he would not submit without a struggle; he would fight to his last breath!

The radio censor would not allow me to say a word in my broadcast to America about the street demonstrations. In passing the post office I walked in to ask if there was any difficulty in telephoning to New York. I was told that there was none. As I was coming out of the building a man with a moustache hailed me, and when I stopped he hurried over and said:

“American?”

“Yes.”

“Maybe you can help me. Dere’s going to be var here—a hell of a var—and I vant to get back to Deetroit.”

“You’d better hurry,” I said.

“Sure, dat’s vat I vant to do. I’ve got a broder dere and a broder-in-law and dey sent me money and I got everything ready, but I vas a damned fool, never took out first papers—and now I have to vait for de quota, and if var comes I’ll be stuck here. So maybe you can fix up tings for me vid de Consul.”

“I guess you’ve got to stay and take your chance,” I said.

“And you go an’ stay if var comes?”

“I suppose so.”

“You sure get killed—we all get killed.”

“Nobody lives for ever.”

“But in Deetroit, I could live a long time—I like Deetroit. Maybe you can do someting. I’ll pay de Consul. Maybe you can tell him . . . I vas a goddam fool, and ven I get to Deetroit now I’ll take out first papers soon as I get off de train—honest! I been writing to all my Slovak friends in America to be sure and take out first papers. Ah! Vat a goddam fool I vas!”

I left him, but he called me back:

“Say! you been in Slovakia?”

“Yes.”

"You like it dere?"

"Yes, I like the people."

"I'll tell you vat's wrong mit dat country—too goddam much politics. But maybe if var comes, it kill a lot of people and kill a lot o' politics—and den maybe it von't be so bad dere. So I come back again!"

I went up to Knickerbocker's room. Fodor and Whitaker were there. They were all busy at typewriters. I told them what I had seen and heard in the street—the slogans, the passion, the protests, the demands of the crowds, and their amazing orderliness, even to a point of keeping open a lane on the sidewalks so that pedestrians could pass unhindered. Typewriters clicked again, sheet after sheet of copy fell out of the rollers. I sat down for a rest and looked over the English papers that had arrived by plane that afternoon. They were full of hope—the Czechs had accepted: Hitler was on his way to Godesberg: Chamberlain would leave the next day: the conflict would be at an end: there would be peace in the world, peace with honour! I recalled the demonstrations, these sturdy Czechs, weeping in the streets of their capital, their horror of possible vassalage, which they had suffered for three hundred years, and which would be upon them again, perhaps in a fiercer manner, if the Anglo-French proposals were to become a reality; and remembering these things, the cheerful comments of the English papers left me cold.

Whitaker and I stepped out on the balcony and looked down upon the tumultuous crowds.

"The last disciplined democracy in the world," said Whitaker. He had seen war in Ethiopia and Spain—revolution in Russia and elsewhere. "Look at them! Even in their agony and wrath they're magnificently disciplined. It breaks my heart to see them."

I went down again. I wanted to be with these people. I couldn't shout with them, but I could listen. At the conjunction of the Prikopi and the Watslavsky, masses of them were coming from different directions. They fused together, and poured upon the main avenue—shouting, defying, ready for battle, ready for death. The loud-speakers boomed out their appeals for order; they urged

the demonstrations to disperse, the organized protests to stop. The Government and the responsible political leaders were frightened; the demonstrations might give Hitler a fresh excuse to impose himself on their country with the consent of France and England.

But only now and then did the demonstrators stop to listen to the loud-speakers; they were not listening to the warnings. They were anxious to catch a word of hope and assurance that at last someone, somewhere, had heard their cries and heeded their woes and would perform a miracle. Perhaps someone would proclaim the annulment of that which their Government had agreed to give away to their most formidable enemy. Not mere fields, factories, forests, rivers, mountains, towns, villages, fortifications, but that of which they had dreamed and for which they had battled for three hundred years—their Freedom, their Independence, their Democracy. If these were gone, what would be left for them?

But no such word came out of the loud-speakers that were mounted on the lamp-posts—nothing but admonitions, pleas, threats; not even assurance that they would be given the right to lay down their lives for their independence. So they kept shouting:

“Give us arms, we want to fight!  
Give us arms, we want to fight!”

Out of somewhere Czechoslovak flags appeared, red, white and blue. At the sight of the flags—symbol of the triumph and the glory which were being snatched away from them—the people broke into frenzied shouts. At once someone started the National Hymn:

*“Where is my home? Where is my home?”*

Hats came off, the marching stopped; traffic everywhere came to a standstill and the sad melody cut through the heart of every listener. Walter Kerr of the *New York Herald Tribune* could endure it no longer. He went to his hotel and locked himself in his room. Another American correspondent said: “I guess I’d better leave. I’ll cry like a loon if I stay out any longer.” Others of us remained. All around us people were weeping; they tried

to sing, but their voices were choked. I saw a policeman wiping his eyes, again and again. Never anywhere in the world had I witnessed a service in any house of worship which was more tense with unselfish emotion or more aglow with purity of motive, as were the demonstrations of these bewildered and grief-stricken people. It was all like a prayer—the indignation, the slogans, the tears, the singing, the will to live, the will to die, above all, the cry: “Now for the right to die fighting!”

Suddenly, two soldiers appeared on bicycles. The demonstration came to an instant standstill and burst into frenzied cheers. Men and women swarmed round the soldiers, embraced them, lifted them, bicycles and all, above their heads, for the multitude to see and acclaim. Soldiers, their own soldiers, with equipment strapped to the bicycle, with the helmets gleaming darkly in the electric light! Soldiers—hope—power—deliverance! Men who knew how to shoot—men who know how to kill, men who knew how to die—men like those of Tabor, five hundred years ago—going forth to battle with hymns to the Lord, giving their lives for what they felt was sacred. In those days the name of the general was Zhizhka, the undefeated—and he was blind in one eye, with a patch over his blindness; and now they had another general, and his name was Sirovy—and he also was blind in one eye, and had a patch over his blindness! Soldiers, soldiers! The khaki-clad men smiled and waved their hands and shouted jubilantly: “*Na Zdar!* *na Zdar!*” Frenzied with exultation the street roared back: “*Na Zdar!* *na Zdar!*”

We were nearing the Deutsches Haus, until a few days ago the social centre of the Henleinist followers. The number was 26, Prikopi. Now, beside the number, there was only one other sign to mark the place; a small vertical sign saying: “Restaurant.” Inside were dining salons, bars, dance halls, club rooms, a park; it was a place of gaiety, comfort and of Henleinism. Would there be a scene? Would the marchers try to storm the building, wreck its furnishings out of passion and revenge? Or would they only shake their fists and shout words of abuse and vituperation? Here would be a test of the discipline and character of the people.

Nearer and nearer we drew to the Haus. I ran ahead and stationed myself at the door. Not a single policeman was there; yet the procession moved on without a word of abuse, without a single missile flung at door or wall.

I fell back into the ranks. On and on the procession swept, merging with other processions, passing other processions, never stopping, until it reached a huge building, evidently a military barrack. There were soldiers on the balcony, here privates, there officers. Once more pandemonium broke loose. Soldiers, fighters, heroes! On the first floor, on the second floor, on the third floor, on every balcony stood men in uniform. Flags waved and circled over hundreds of heads, and with the flags, it seemed, circled the very souls of the people. "Na Zdar, na Zdar!" cried the street. "Na Zdar, na Zdar!" cried back the soldiers and the officers. They were smiling, too. There was no panic, no bewilderment about the men in uniform. Well, then, not all was lost, perhaps nothing. Politicians might hesitate, might think too much, might think wrongly; but soldiers were different. Soldiers would fight and die rather than disgrace themselves and their people. Soldiers! Soldiers!

Suddenly at the corner where I was standing I heard loud laughter. I looked around. From the window of the top floor of a nearby house a fat woman was frantically waving, not a banner, but, of all things, a pair of white pyjama trousers! It was impossible not to laugh. In her eagerness to greet the demonstrations she had evidently grabbed the first thing within reach, and waved it in all directions. But the laughter lasted only a moment—a fleeting and unforgettable moment.

Fresh cries, fresh courage, fresh hosannas to the soldier:

"Long live the army!  
Hail, Sirovy!  
The Army into Power!  
Give us arms!  
We want to fight!  
Hail, Sirovy!  
Hail the Army, the Army into power!"

And then once more the melancholy strains: "*Where is my home? Where is my home?*"

So much was happening all around me that I stopped under a street light and, snatching pencil and copybook, started to jot down notes. At once someone poked me rudely in the side and, looking up, I saw myself surrounded by suspicious men and women. "Who are you?" said one man, his eyes blazing.

"An American journalist."

"Your papers."

"Yes, your papers," came a chorus of voices.

Quickly I pulled out my passport and my credentials from the Prague Foreign Office. No one bothered to examine them; it was enough that I had them. Two men put their arms around me and one of them said:

"At least your country hasn't sold us out."

Another said: "Perhaps you'd better not write anything now—people are wrought up; they might take you for a German spy. There are lots of them around."

I put back pencil and notebook . . .

The demonstrators started to move again. Turning the corner, they ran into a truck-load of furniture, bedding, dishes—obviously a refugee truck from the Sudetenland. On the seat of the truck were two elderly women in kerchiefs, between them a little girl. The girl was weeping, and one of the women was caressing her and saying: "Don't be afraid." The truck stopped, but not for long; the crowd stepped aside and made room for it. As it rolled by, person after person waved, shouting, "Don't be afraid!" As the truck turned the corner, I saw the little girl wave at the crowd.

Sirovy came out and spoke briefly:

"We've been betrayed, that's all. Let's be calm and look forward to the future."

The man of the hour had spoken. The crowd had heard and seen him—this stalwart soldier who had fought in Russia as commander of a Czech regiment that bore the name of Huss; a simple man, staying out of the limelight, and blind in one eye—like

Zhizhka of old—the unconquered and unconquerable Zhizhka. Perhaps, then, he too was a tower of invincibility!

Other demonstrations marched in other directions. One swooped down on the radio station, a Government institution. The Government was making speeches to the country; why couldn't they, the people, address a word to their countrymen? The demand seemed reasonable enough to the managers of the station—or perhaps they, too, felt it was about time that the street had a chance to address itself to the country. The door opened, but the crowd didn't rush in; they remained in the street, while only one man—their spokesman—went into one of the studios and to the microphone. He began:

"Countrymen, this is nothing—we'll get arms—we'll fight Hitler—"

He went on with his speech, but it was no longer heard outside—the censor had cut him off.

The radio was even less free than the press—the censor wouldn't allow me to say a word about the demonstrations in my broadcast to America.

"But why not?" I argued. "It is a fact, the momentous fact of the hour, and America certainly ought to know of it."

"No, you can't say a word about the demonstrations." And with his pencil he cut out every reference to the storm of passion and unrest that was rocking the city of Prague.

It was late when I returned home. Tired and shaky, I went up to Knickerbocker's room and joined a crowd of newspaper men. Someone had read in a newspaper a story that the British and the French had offered to guarantee the independence of the new Czechoslovakia. The words were greeted by a howl of laughter.

"If the Czechs have any sense," said one American, "they'd appeal to Iceland to guarantee their independence."

"Or to Luxembourg."

"I've got a better guarantor yet, the best of all," said another man. "The King of Abyssinia!"

Again there was a roar of laughter.

## Chapter XIX

SEPTEMBER 22 (THURSDAY)

IT WAS almost dawn when I went to bed. I didn't sleep long. At seven I was wakened by shouts. I looked out of the window, and there were fresh demonstrations in the street, small at first, with no more than about two thousand men and women marching. They swung vigorously up and down the Watslavsky Namesti shouting slogans, and every time they crossed a street or turned a corner they gathered fresh recruits. They didn't call on people to join; they didn't have to. From houses, shops, nearby side streets and avenues, singly and in groups, people poured of their own accord into the marching ranks. The shouting was growing more and more angry; in spite of the demands of the night before, the Cabinet which had accepted the Anglo-French proposals refused to resign. The protests of the people, had remained unanswered. Now they would repeat them; they would thunder them so loudly that the walls of the Parliament building and of the Castle would shake. They wouldn't have a Cabinet which had said "yes" to the partition of the country, which had sacrificed its independence and democracy. Independence! Democracy! The words still roused the will to fight and die.

Raymond Gram Swing and I watched the demonstration from the balcony of a hotel room. "Poor people," he said, "calling for a chance to get killed."

With France and England refusing to come to their help; with Russia non-committal as to her willingness to fight without France, and feared and unwanted by the Agrarians, the strongest party in the country: with Hungary and Poland crying out more boldly for territory, and threatening to march over their respective borders: with the Little Entente, shaken by the stand of France and England into impotence—what hope of survival had Czechs in war? They would have to fight alone—so it looked at the moment—not only against Germany, but against Poland and Hungary as well.

The demonstrations had roused the Nazis to fresh torrents of abuse and fresh threats, the deadliest they had yet screamed out to the world: Benes was "a monstrous liar and murderer;" "Red bandits" were perpetrating atrocities on innocent Germans; and something new—an effort to whip up French and English hostility against the Czechs by the charge that a "Red bandit leader" had spoken of them as "swine." The Nazi radio station at Leipzig had quoted a leading Nazi paper as demanding that Slovakia be divided between Hungary and Poland: that the Sudeten territories be immediately occupied by German troops: that Benes resign from the presidency, and that Czechoslovakia settle on a government that would guarantee the country against a "Communist revolution."

Professor N—— who had once explained to me that this was "the age of the petty intellectual," said:

"You see the kind of independence they are offering us even now, before there is a single German soldier on our territory?"

Half a dozen of us had listened to him, and there was nothing we could say to challenge his statement or to hold out any solace to him.

Yet Prague at the moment did not care what was going on outside. The Nazi Press might do all it could to inflame the German people against Czechs: Chamberlain and Hitler might meet in Godesberg and agree on the division of their territory and their populations—they would be masters of their own fate. They would thrust aside the Anglo-French proposals and the Cabinet that had accepted them. They would be free!

The day had started with a strike. Workers went to their factories with their lunch-boxes, but didn't stay long. They got together and marched in a body to swell the demonstrations that had already been coursing all over the city; often foremen, managers, directors marched with them. There were more older men and women in the ranks than the night before, also more children. In the column which I joined there was a woman with a baby in her arms. We turned a corner at which a man was standing with a push-cart loaded with plums. Angry and impassioned as were the marchers, they were careful not to press

against the push-cart, and the man easily rolled it off into a nearby side street where there was only a fragmentary demonstration.

The slogans were the same as the night before—denunciations of France and England; demands for the resignation of the Cabinet, for a military dictatorship, and for General Sirovy to be in command, presumably as Prime Minister. Now and then one could hear the words: “Away with Benes,” “Down with the Jews,” “Down with the Soviet Union,” but only now and then. The voice of the Fascist was still feeble, too feeble to rise above the clamour for the preservation of the nation’s liberties.

More and more people were carrying flags, waving them high over their heads, and every time they did so they strained their voices to the utmost with the slogan of the moment. More and more people were weeping, shouting slogans while tears streamed down their faces. Many were in tears, especially older men.

In the French and English Grammar School the children marched up to the French director and said: “We don’t want you to teach us your history any more.” France, the land they had adored and revered, had become overnight an object of obloquy. Demonstratively they walked about the school several times and went home. Their parents, those who were not marching in the streets, were surprised to see them back. “What happened?” said one mother to her ten-year-old boy. “I never want to hear the French language again,” he answered sadly. “Now, listen, sonny——” But he wouldn’t let her continue. “I mean it, mamma——” And he put his arms round his mother and cried. “And I, too, cried,” said this stalwart and highly-educated Czech mother, “and we cried for a long time, for even I—old as I am—could find no word of consolation for my son.” Another mother told me that as soon as her son got home he picked up a national flag and rushed out into the street. “I wish I were old enough,” he said, “to carry a gun—I’d shoot the French.”

Still the Cabinet refused to resign, and with every minute the demand for the resignation grew more angry and more threatening. The people hadn’t forgotten the men who had capitulated to the enemy. Even if there was nothing else they could do they shouldn’t have surrendered. More and more men and women

thundered for the Cabinet's resignation. They were in dead earnest, too. They still had their Democracy; they were still willing to fight and die for their Democracy. They were still *the People*. Their will still counted, and they wouldn't have it thwarted—not by men whom they no longer counted as expressing it truthfully. They wanted Sirovy. They wanted a military dictatorship. They wanted soldiers and not politicians to rule them in this hour of tragedy, and they spared neither their lungs nor their throats in proclaiming their will to the whole city, the whole world.

With rare exceptions there was no evidence of cleavage within the ranks of the marchers. Young Dr. Rashin, son of a former Cabinet Minister, mounted a rostrum and said: "A Communist shot my father, but now we go hand in hand, Communists and I." The crowd thundered approval. A Slovak peasant, an Agrarian, wanted to make a speech, the crowd howled him down. They were embittered against the Agrarians, because rumour said it was they who had stood against the dissolution of the Cabinet. A countryman of the Slovak pleaded for a chance for him to make his speech. The crowd agreed. The Slovak said that as an Agrarian he wanted to assure his fellow-citizens that, in this hour of the nation's catastrophe, all parties and all nationalities should support the Republic. His words evoked thunderous applause and shouts. The street, then, was upholding the people's reputation for order, it was giving the police no excuse for complaint or interference, it was voicing the nation's spiritual unity. All were patriots now; all were bound together by the same spirit of protest and consecration. Class didn't matter, race didn't matter, nationality didn't matter, religion didn't matter, only faith in the Republic; in all it had stood for during the twenty years of its life, in all that it had achieved and meant to achieve—that alone was sacred.'

For once the newspapers were permitted to give vent to their real feelings. Front-page headlines cried out in bold letters.

*Chesske Slovo:*

"ALLIED GOVERNMENTS DICTATE TO US AS  
TO A CONQUERED PEOPLE."

*Prager Tageblatt:*

"ACCEPTANCE UNDER IRRESISTIBLE PRESSURE  
FROM FRANCE AND ENGLAND."

And further down, in the middle of the page, another headline:

"NO PARALLEL IN HISTORY."

*A-Zet:*

"HOW GOVERNMENT DECIDED  
ULTIMATUM OF ALLIES AND THE ENEMY."

In the stories under the headlines there was not one word of hate, abuse or denunciation of anybody; not even of the Nazis.

But the Nazis were already crying "Too late!" The Anglo-French proposals would no longer satisfy them; "the moribund Prague system," which was a "Citadel of democracy in Central Europe against Fascism," would have to break up. "Germany doesn't wish to wait," wrote the *Lokal Anzeiger* of Berlin, "and has no intention of waiting. And that, by God! is no mere phrase."

That was precisely what the Czechs had been saying for years, for months, and with especial vigour since their mobilization on the 21st of May. Germany, they kept repeating calmly but decisively, was bent solely on the break-up of their Republic, their democracy, their military and economic might, their political and spiritual independence. And now the German Press was clamouring for it openly, boldly, murderously.

Because they all knew it, to the youngest child among them, the people persisted in demonstrating all over the city, especially in the main streets. High officials in the Government, leaders of political parties, became alarmed. There might be a revolution. Anger and grief might fuse into desperation. The crowds of workmen who had gone on strike and joined the demonstrations only intensified the alarm. The atmosphere of the city crackled with explosiveness. One after another, Government and party leaders, addressed the public. Dr. Zenkls, the mayor of Prague, said:

"None of you has the right to suppose that your sorrow is greater than the sorrow of those who are calling you to keep the

peace of the city. Let us not, under any circumstances, disrupt order and discipline. If in this tragic moment others have deserted us, we must at least not desert ourselves . . . Our sorrow is universally alike, and for that reason alone our discipline must remain unshattered . . . Otherwise we facilitate the realization of the enemy's aims. The Government has the wish to entrust the affairs of the State and Nation into the hands of a new Ministry, which shall be formed on the widest possible foundation . . . We shall allow no one in the world to devastate and degrade us . . ."

The Cabinet, then, had resigned; there would be a new Government and the Army would be in it. That was cheering news; but the public wouldn't disperse; they would continue shouting their protests and their wrath against all threats to their independence; they would thunder their will so loudly and so passionately that no Cabinet, least of all the Generals in it, would dare carry out the Anglo-French proposals. "After all," cried an orator from the steps of the John Huss monument, "it is a question of life and death to us. If our frontiers go and our fortifications go we'll have only German bayonets to defend us."

They marched on and on, and the longer they marched, the more passionately they shouted, the more alarmed became the leaders in the Government and in the political parties. Dr. Zenkls spoke again. It did no good. Leaders of the trade unions, the Catholics, the Sokols, the Franciscan Orders, the newspapers, of every conceivable organization which might have a following in the street appeared before the microphone and pleaded with the marchers to go home. It was useless. They would listen to nobody except their own tormented souls.

The saddest of all the speeches came from Dr. Derer, a Slovak, Minister of Justice in the fallen Cabinet. I had seen Dr. Derer once, a tall, lithe man of about fifty, with thick iron-grey hair combed in Pompadour fashion, and with glasses over earnest and kindly eyes. He had been in the thick of the fight against his compatriots in the Hlinka Party, and the threat to the integrity of the Republic had unstrung him. But revolution might bring an immediate invasion, and they were all alone. He must warn the people of the greatest of all dangers that was facing them—themselves! He started to speak, but couldn't go on. Facing the

people, he broke down and wept and for a brief interval no words came out of the loud-speakers . . . But he quickly recovered, and in a voice throbbing with emotion, he went on :

"Dr. Alois Rasin, the first Minister of Finance in our State, spoke these words on his deathbed : 'There'll be moments when it'll be necessary to tell the people the whole truth, and only the truth, the sole truth.' Czech people, we're not concealing from ourselves the real situation, the real truth, but only when we think of it all in the light of this truth shall we be able to salvage everything that is still possible of salvation. This truth declares that only that people can save itself in an hour of darkness which doesn't smash or scrap the truth and which gains mastery of itself. We must gain this mastery of ourselves in order that others shall not gain mastery over us . . . I beg of you, my Czech people in Bohemia and Moravia, and Slovak people, in this terrible hour in our history, not to be misled by irresponsible and provocative words, not to engage in acts which cannot be undone and can bring an end to everything which in twenty years of fighting and struggling we have achieved . . . Let the truth which we hear, tragic and shattering as it is, keep us from losing our heads, our good sense, our faith in the future. Let's bear our sorrow with pride!"

People wept as they listened to this moving speech; it was impossible not to weep.

"Let's bear our sorrow with pride!"

The Square in front of the Parliament building seethed with tumult. Crowd after crowd poured into its vastness with shouts, banners and song. More and more columns; workers, clerks, students, business men came to proclaim their resolution to save the Republic and the independence of their nation. Flags waved from the building. The stairway was black with people and thick with banners. A Legionnaire in uniform appeared on the balcony. He attempted to make a speech, but the crowd wouldn't listen. They wanted to hear the men they had elected to govern them. What words of comfort, of trust, of fight, would they offer? When

no deputy appeared, a section of the demonstrators tried to push their way into the building. Without use of force, with words only, the police dissuaded them from the effort. No gulf here and no clash between people and police. Then someone brought along loud-speakers. The crowds acclaimed the man with uproarious enthusiasm. After all there would be speeches: their deputies would address them; they hadn't been clamouring in vain.

Quickly the loud-speakers were mounted on the balustrades. They announced the Cabinet had fallen. A cry of relief went up. The first victory was won! Then came the further announcement that the Army would be represented in the Cabinet. More cries of joy. At last good news, for the first time since the radio, on the previous afternoon, had broken the sad news of the capitulation to the Anglo-French proposals. Then came speeches, chiefly pleas for order, for unity, for discipline. The speakers were Deputy Markowitz, chairman of the Legionnaire Society; Deputy Gottwald, the Communist; Dr. Ladislau Rashin, vice-chairman of the National Unity Party; Deputy Stashek of the People's Party; Deputy Gaida, leader of the Fascists. He was greeted with "boos," for, after all, it was Fascism in the neighbouring country that was seeking to throttle their independence and their democracy. Yet he managed to explain that he appeared before them not as a Fascist but as a soldier. Most significant were the words of Kosek, a clerical leader, who said that all Catholics were at one with the whole nation in this moment of its sorrow; and young Rashin announced that for the moment the differences between Catholic and Communist had ceased to exist. Then came General Obratilek. The crowd thundered and clapped and shouted with rapture; he had come, he said, to read a declaration by General Sirovy.

"I guarantee that the Army is standing, and will continue to do so, on our frontiers, and will defend our liberties to the very end. Here in Prague we ask all of you to keep calm and to retain your cool nerve. The time may soon come when I shall call on you to take a more active part in the defence in which you all yearn to join. Do not allow any internal enemies to sway you into the belief that the Army could possibly change its

attitude. Those who start a whispering campaign should be accorded the treatment they earn."

These were heartening words, the most heartening that had been spoken; and they were from Sirovy, the General with a patch over his blind eye!

Early in the afternoon the demonstrations ceased. Towards evening it began to drizzle, and though it didn't stop, crowds gathered round the loud-speakers. This time Benes would speak. I stood at the upper end of the Watslavsky Namesti. More and more people were assembling in the rain. Finally, there was a fanfare from the patriotic opera *Lubitsche*. Then Benes spoke:

"... It isn't we alone who are concerned; that only seems so because our problem in this hour of darkness is something in and of itself . . . we shall experience many disturbing moments before peace and order again rule this part of the world . . . That's why it's important for us under all circumstances . . . to maintain order, and above all—unity. . . . At times it is necessary to negotiate, and at times it is necessary to fight, and if we have to fight we shall do so to our last breath. I have my plans for all contingencies, and shall not allow myself to be led astray. We wish for an agreement . . . of all the big powers in the world, and if it is honourable it'll be of advantage also to our people. I cherish no fear for the Nation or the State; both have deep and powerful roots; as Lubitsch in Smetana's sage words prophesied; 'My dear Czech Nation shall not perish. No, it shall not perish; it shall survive all its terrors . . .'"

The speech was brief, frank, "realistically" encouraging, as a Czech might say. Benes held out no hope for peace in Europe, neither did he alarm his people with any prophecy of hopelessness. He had spoken not one word of violence: not one word of rebuke to the people who on that very day had been blaring out to the world that he was "a liar" and "a murderer." A man of sorrow and obviously with a broken heart, but with enormous courage; above all, with matchless dignity. Two women were sobbing, and when on the conclusion of the address a choir sang the National Hymn, tears streamed down many faces.

Leaning against a lamp-post was a strange-looking man, a type one often sees in Russia, especially in the bazaars, but which I had never seen anywhere in Czechoslovakia. He might have been a beggar, a self-anointed saint, or only a rogue. His clothes were rumpled, his eyes big and glassy and overhung by heavy brows. With his arms akimbo he was staring at the sidewalk, or perhaps only at the soaked slippers which he was wearing. His trousers reached only to his calves, his long muddy socks were down to his heels.

I drew close, but he never lifted his eyes from the sidewalk. The rain didn't bother him.

"Did you hear the President's speech?" I asked.

He glanced up, a little sullenly, as though resenting the intrusion. He didn't say a word. His antipathy only spurred my curiosity; so I said: "What do you think is going to happen now?"

He coughed and spat, smoothed his beard and smacked his lips and said severely: "Nothing. Nothing is going to happen. I don't believe in Man. Man is a fraud. It's all in the hands of God, and if you believed in God you'd never ask your silly question."

He walked up towards the Museum, and was lost in the crowds.

The new Government lost no time in making its power felt. It was a government of experts, including two generals, with Sirovy at the helm as Prime Minister. It would be a tough Government, everybody said, and everybody was confident. Prague had assumed its normal aspect of order and reserve.

Early in the evening, as I was coming from the radio station I ran into a new kind of demonstration. It was quiet; none of the marchers said a word, and it was made up of men only, some young, some over thirty; some in uniform some in civilian clothes, every one with a rifle on his shoulder. Obviously the new Cabinet was summoning fresh reserves to the colours! There was no applause as these men walked along the street; Czechs don't applaud when they regain their confidence; then their magnificent poise asserts itself; they "think" and hold their tongue.

When I reached the Watslavsky Namesti I saw still another demonstration—cavalrymen in uniform on horses with equipment

on their shoulders, some with Red Cross bands round their arms; column after column of rugged youths on sleek and sturdy horses trotting along the main avenue past taxis, trams, street lights, their rifles and helmets catching glints of light. This time though weary and reassured, the public couldn't refrain from applauding and shouting, "*Na Zdar!*"—a cheerful shout now, a contrast to the anger, the frustration, the despair of the night before and of the morning. Where were they going? "Do you know?" I asked an old woman selling newspapers. "They know all right." And she turned to wait on a customer. That was enough for her. That, doubtless, was enough for any Czech who saw the procession. Sirovy had said the country would be protected, and here was proof of it—men with rifles, and on as fine horses as there were in the world, trotting off somewhere—to hold a position.

Then several truck-loads of soldiers rumbled swiftly by, and they, too, wore helmets—and had rifles.

On reaching the hotel, Williams of the *Christian Science Monitor*, came up and said:

"Have you read Karel Capek's Prayer?"

"No; where has it appeared?"

"Here, read it." He handed me a copy of the *Prager Tageblatt*, and pointed to a certain column. "I've cabled most of it to my paper, with the suggestion that ministers read it from their pulpits next Sunday. You ought to broadcast it to America. It is so beautiful, and so moving."

I read it and that night included it in my broadcast.

"God, Thou hast created this beautiful country. Thou seest our pain and our disappointment. Thou knowest what we are feeling and how bowed our heads are, not with shame—we need feel no shame even if we shall be struck by the iron rod of Fate. We were not defeated, nor were we of those who showed too little resolution. Our people have lost none of their honour. They have lost only a part of their body. We are like a person caught in the cogs of a wheel and who, in the midst of terrifying pain, tells us that he is still alive.

"Our people live, and in their great pain we feel how strongly and how deeply they live.

"God, Thou Who hast created this people—we needn't tell this to Thee. But, for the sake of ourselves and our lips and our hearts, we must try to formulate what it is we mustn't lose, namely our faith in ourselves and in our divinely-inspired history. We believe that in history we have not stood, and will not stand, on the side of wrong.

"We need faith; we need inner strength; we need an active love to make us tenfold strong. A people will never be a little people if it never relinquishes faith in the future and faith in work for a better day."

## Chapter XX

SEPTEMBER 23 (FRIDAY)

ANOTHER bright and sunny day, as welcome after the night of murk and drizzle as the fresh hopefulness of the people after the storm of grief and wrath.

Walking along the Watslavsky Namesti I heard the roar of a plane. Quickly my eyes went upward, and a short distance away, near the Museum and flying so low that we could see the number and other insignia gleaming in the sun, was a military plane; out of it came streams of handbills floating in the air. Soon they fell to the ground. From every direction people ran to pick them up. One fell directly in front of me, but before I could reach for it a shopgirl gathered it in her hand, and when she saw that I, too, had wanted to pick it up she invited me, smilingly, to read it as she held it in her hand. It was a reprint of the speech of General Sirovy, the new Prime Minister, calling on the people to observe order and not to play into the hands of the enemy.

"Do you like your new Prime Minister?" I asked.

"Everybody does," she answered with pride. She was about seventeen, with unruly dark-brown hair, deep-blue eyes and an earnest expression which was accentuated by the black uniform she was wearing.

"What d'you think is going to happen now?"

"War!" she snapped out quickly.

"Do you want war?"

"Nobody wants war; but it's better to have war than to live under Hitler."

"You don't like Fascism?"

"I love my country, and we don't want Fascism."

"Do you speak English?" I asked.

"No!" she flung out indignantly, "nor French. The traitors!"  
She ran into a nearby shop.

As I passed one of the smaller hotels I ran into my friend from Brno.

"What did I tell you?" he said, with a twinkle of triumph.

"What's going to happen now?"

"Either they leave us alone or we fight."

"Hitler's gone too far," I said. "The French and British have agreed to let him have the land he wants, and the Hodja Cabinet have accepted the Anglo-French proposals."

"But Parliament has not ratified the action of the Cabinet, remember that. It won't dare to ratify it—the people will throw the Deputies into the Vultava. But there's a new Cabinet now, and Sirovy is Prime Minister, and he's a soldier, not a politician."

"So you feel confident?"

"Yes; and in a few hours I am going to be in uniform. Good-bye."

He walked off. As I followed him with my eyes I couldn't help feeling a little sad. He was a stalwart man, physically and mentally. He wouldn't accept the hospitality of his *fiancée's* friends because they wouldn't take payment for the room they offered him. "I am a Czech," he had said, and explained that his love of independence was greater than his love of physical comfort or of any other satisfaction, material or social. And now he was ready to fight and die for that very independence. People like that could be conquered, but not crushed.

General Sirovy was the idol of the moment. Chambermaids, taxi drivers, shopkeepers, students, manufacturers, bankers, professors, spoke of him with hope and adulation. They saw in him the embodiment of the best that there was in their civilization—democracy, competence, tolerance, independence—above all, a power that could, and would, with the wholehearted support of the people defy the dictates of friends and the threats of enemies. Fifty years old, of sturdy build, with an immense neck and shoulders, this former student of technology and inveterate pipe-smoker, had assumed a formidable responsibility. France and England had wrested from the Hodja Cabinet surrender to Germany: the people had shouted and sung and wept the Hodja Cabinet out of power and put Sirovy into Hodja's place. They

had pledged their possessions, their very lives, if only he would undo the action of the fallen Cabinet. Never before had they been so reinforced in their old conviction that Germany was seeking their destruction as a State, a nation, a democracy.

The London *Times* was assuring its readers editorially on September 22nd that "he (Mr. Chamberlain) is prepared, it seems, to offer the Czechoslovakian Government assurances and safeguards, it has never had from Great Britain before;" but the *Berliner Tageblatt* was jubilantly proclaiming that Benes' acceptance of the Anglo-French proposals was no longer important because "a new situation had arisen." Nazi radio and Nazi press were screaming for the destruction of Czechoslovakia. Hitler meant more than to avenge the collapse of the Henleinist *putsch* in Egerland. "They want our blood and all of it!" cried out a Czech editor, "but now they can only get it by spilling theirs. They won't get it for nothing, and even Mr. Chamberlain cannot give it away."

That was the way the whole nation felt, and only because of their immense trust in Sirovy. The responsibility, therefore, was his, officially, more than that of any man, even of Benes, as to the steps to take either to win back France and England to the support of the nation's independence or to uphold it by the sword with its own flesh and blood. He might be blind in one eye, but so was Zhizhka. In his other eye he had all the vision in the world, and saw beyond the threat and the darkness of the hour. So the people believed.

With the new hope had come fresh doubt and self-condemnation in unexpected quarters. I was in the home of Mr. M—, lawyer, savant, patriot. His wife was also there, so were some of his close friends. We were drinking coffee, eating sandwiches and cake, and talking. M— turned to me and said bluntly:

"Tell me, what's the matter with us Czechs?"

His question surprised me. Only a little earlier he had said that the Czechs, coming to life again as a nation after three centuries of somnolence, had a right, by virtue of their beliefs and achievements, to the respect of the outside world, especially of the English-speaking peoples. And now he spoke in a spirit of disillusionment with his people.

"I don't understand what you mean," I said.

He lifted his glasses from the bridge of his nose, wiped his eyes, and after a long pause, and without looking at me or at any one, he said slowly and gravely:

"I guess we're still only peasants—clumsy, crude, unattractive."

Such self-condemnation sounded Russian and not at all Czech and I said so.

"That's what I've been saying," interrupted his wife. Like her husband, she was well versed in languages and in books and her gentleness and grace were a living denial of her husband's charge.

"Of course," said another guest, a business man, pale and thin, and with the ring of sturdiness in his voice, "we're a nation of workers—not aristocrats, and we've had no time for social extravagances and refined pleasantries. We have no Hungarian nobles among us, nor Polish gentry."

"Then," interrupted the lawyer, "we've always had to work for our living, all of us, and that's why we are so coarse, too coarse for our friends; I am afraid they don't like us, not at all."

I assured him he was mistaken; as far as I knew, Americans and Englishmen had always held the Czechs in high esteem. My words brought neither reassurance nor comfort to our host.

"If the people of France and England had really liked us, their Governments couldn't have thrown us to the wolves as they have. You don't read much protest against Daladier and Chamberlain on the part of the French and the English people." He looked at me as if he were trying not only with his eyes, but with his whole soul to shame me into abandoning all pretence. But I stuck to my words; for they expressed my real conviction. In the months that I had travelled through the country, in the contacts I had made with the people, I had learned to admire them for their common sense, their competence, their friendliness; I liked the very simplicity of habits and manners which my host at this moment described as *crudeness*.

"We've made many mistakes," said the other guest, "and the biggest mistake was our democracy. We should have taken our democracy like a strong medicine in small doses at a time."

"That's quite true," said the lawyer's wife. "Look at the Poles: if they had had a Henlein they'd have put him in gaol

long before he'd have any chance, with Hitler's help, to terrorize the Sudeten Germans into enmity against us."

"Our professors," said the lawyer, "did the best they could. They had faith in the people and in their friends."

"Too much faith in their friends," said the pale man.

"That's the trouble with us," said the lawyer harshly. "We're too trustful. France—who would have thought she'd turn around and betray us? My daughter was going to study at the Sorbonne next summer. Last night she tore up and burned all her correspondence with the school. She swore she'll never speak French as long as she lives. France, she said isn't a country but a cesspool. Imagine my daughter speaking such words about the French!"

"Oh, well," said the lawyer's wife, "we needn't be so pessimistic; now Sirovy is Prime Minister, and he is no college professor."

"I hope he'll be tough," said the pale man.

"We're lost if he isn't," echoed the lawyer dolefully.

Whereupon his wife chuckled and said: "You must excuse my husband: he hasn't had a vacation all summer and he is a little tired."

Her words carried no conviction to her hearers, least of all to me. Her husband may have been physically indisposed, but above all he was a man with a tormented soul.

In our pre-occupation here with local events, we had almost forgotten about Godesberg. The first news we received conveyed no specially dramatic information. The headline of the *London Daily Express*, "*Premier Smiling after 2½ Hours with Hitler*," might mean anything or nothing. Certain it was from the reports in the British Press that the German people were relieved by the appearance of Mr. Chamberlain on German soil for another conference. Obviously the prospect of war terrified them. Every American and British journalist who came through Germany told us that the German people loathed the thought of war—excepting, of course, the very young, those in the early twenties, the very ones who in the Sudetenlands had become the backbone of the Henleinist movement. Mr. Chamberlain must have been impressed with these

demonstrations of welcome or, as someone had written, "Ovations, as to a Messenger of Peace." He had become the hero of the moment, of the German people perhaps more than of any other in the world. That, of course—so it seemed to us in Prague—would be an immense source of comfort and power to him in any further negotiations with the German dictator.

But what had been happening in Godesberg we didn't know. We had heard that instead of going for another conference with Hitler, the Prime Minister had sent him a letter, presumably a protest against excessive demands. But to us in Prague it was far more significant that fresh Czech Reserves were being called to the colours. Had the Godesberg negotiations collapsed? Had Mr. Chamberlain—in spite of the daily cries in the German press and radio for the destruction of Czechoslovakia—at last become convinced by talking with Hitler that these cries, more and more frenzied from day to day, were an expression of his will, too? Or had the new Cabinet under Sirovy finally resolved to defy friends and enemies alike and to defend—as the people had been demanding—the frontiers of their country?

German press and radio were already busy hurtling epithets at the new Czech Premier. "Tool of Moscow," "the Robber Chieftain," they called him, and the Army was "the beastly blood-thirsty soldiery." But Sirovy was busy, the Army was busy; more and more men in civilian clothes; with suitcases and rifles, singly and in squads, were making their way to the railway stations. That carried more meaning than all the rumours about Godesberg.

Towards evening I saw an exciting full-page headline in the evening *Chesske Slovo*:

#### "CHAMBERLAIN PLAN MENACED?"

Hurriedly I read the story, which was printed in bolder and blacker type than usual. It expressed the opinion, and no more, that there might be a possible breakdown in the Godesberg conversations; the British Prime Minister had offered stiff resistance to Hitler's fresh demands.

This was exciting news; it might have some connection with the mobilization of Czech Reserves. Knickerbocker *had* been in

communication with Paris, and he confirmed the report of a breakdown in the Godesberg negotiations.

"It must be," I said, "because Hitler is demanding much more than the French and the British had induced the Czechs to give."

"He's demanding plenty. But do you know what I've been thinking? Chamberlain may fool us all yet."

"That's an interesting theory," I said.

"Maybe he's only playing a game and acting a part." Knickerbocker laughed boyishly. "Maybe the old boy is manipulating things so as to give Hitler a chance to break off negotiations. Then, if war comes, Hitler will be the aggressor in the eyes of the German people and of the whole world, especially of America. Think what a victory that would be for the Allies!"

"If that's so——" I started, but he interrupted me.

"In their clumsy and exasperating way the British have always managed at the last minute to pull a rabbit from somebody's hat, not always their own."

There was logic in Knickerbocker's words, but he laughed uproariously.

"Laughing at me for trying to make my mind up whether you're a fool or a prophet?" I asked.

"No, laughing at the British—think of it. Chamberlain's got more than half of the world cursing him for betraying the Czechs; now at Godesberg he is pressing Hitler into a corner in the hope, perhaps, of keeping him there forever. What a surprise if he succeeds! Our British colleagues here who've been telling us how ashamed they are of being British will eat their words—and so'll we all."

"Knick," I said, "that's a marvellous theory, and I hope you're right, but I think you're just crazy."

"I think so myself," he said and laughed again.

On reflection I said: "Of course the whole thing is so crazy that even your crazy idea may prove true."

"Remember what I told you of the way the British have of pulling a rabbit out of their own or somebody else's hat, and they usually wait until the last minute—a big, live rabbit, with blinking eyes and quivering ears."

Later we were joined by a British journalist and his wife, both

severely critical of the Prime Minister's foreign policies. I told them what Knickerbocker had said.

"The break in the negotiations in Godesberg doesn't mean a thing," said the British journalist. "I have a feeling Chamberlain will sacrifice Czechoslovakia for the sake of his class interests."

Knickerbocker loosened on him a stream of hot indignation. But the British journalist laughed and said:

"We'll see."

Other correspondents kept coming in, American and British. The room was thick with smoke, loud with lively chatter. John Whitaker arrived. He had just come from the Sudetens, and was bursting with news of the widespread Czech preparations for war—trees felled over roads: barbed wire fences: soldiers turning travellers away from certain crossings, and the telephone connection with Prague practically severed. He had tried for hours to call up from there, but the operator never made the connection. It was clear now that whether or not the British Prime Minister and Hitler ever could come to an agreement, the Czechs under Sirovy were girding their military loins and would have much to say about its fulfilment—if necessary with guns!

The telephone rang. Knickerbocker answered the call. I stood beside him and I saw him contract his brow as though he were listening to grave and exciting news. "Fodor—somebody—" he shouted, "please turn on the radio. Quick!—Prague station." Silence fell over the room. Fodor rushed to the radio and turned it on. We all drew close, and out of it in a slow, singularly melodious voice came the words in Czech:

"... Go in your civilian clothes. Take along winter under-wear—food for two days—"

I was translating the words as I heard them, and Knickerbocker broke in excitedly: "General mobilization! It's war all right."

As soon as the broadcast was finished there was shouting outside—loud and happy.

"Shouting," remarked Whitaker gravely. "I heard them shout like that in Spain. They don't know what it means."

"Perhaps these people do," someone interjected. "They've been clamouring for a chance to fight."

"They always shout when there's war," said Fodor. "I heard them in the last war . . . People are funny."

The shouting was renewed, louder and louder.

"Well, what'll you say now about your Prime Minister?" said Knickerbocker triumphantly, as he turned to the British correspondent.

"I still am not convinced," was the reply.

Indignantly Knickerbocker said:

"You don't suppose the Czechs would order a general mobilization without his consent?"

"All right, you win—perhaps!"

We all went into the street, except those who had immediate stories to write. The sidewalks were swarming with people and the city was already partially darkened. Again there were shouts, now across the street: now at the next corner: now somewhere far away—disjointed, sporadic, as of happy picnickers on their way home. No grief and no wrath in these outbursts of emotion; no grievance at all against man or destiny. A few steps away, outside the office of the *Nardona Politica*, a crowd was reading the writing in chalk on a blackboard:

"General Mobilization of all Men up to Forty."

That was all the bulletin said, but men stood there with eyes fixed on the words. One man started to applaud; another flashed out of his inside pocket a piece of paper, waved it over his head, and shouted: "I'm going straight from here!" And he ran away. Bystanders applauded him and laughed approval. A woman who had watched him—well dressed, dignified, and with a bundle under her arm—started to weep.

"Long live the Army!" someone shouted.

"Long live the Army!" came a loud and spontaneous burst of voices.

More lights went out, Prague became dim with dusk, patches of light alternated with patches of darkness. Out of a wine cellar came about half a dozen young men. On the pavement they huddled like a cheering squad and shouted one wordless yell. Then still yelling, they dashed towards a nearby tram and jumped inside.

From other wine cellars and from cafés more and more young men were coming out, sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by young women. The only places out of which they didn't appear were the movie houses where the mobilization order had not yet been announced.

I went into a Slovak wine cellar. The Slovak orchestra was playing the national hymn and the clients were standing up and singing it. No pathos in this singing, no heart-break—nothing like the singing in the streets only the previous morning. In a corner a tall young man held his arm round a girl whose head reached only to his shoulders; they looked into each other's faces as they sang. When the song ended, he kissed her. Other men quickly shook hands with girls or kissed them, and also left, alone, or with girls. Nobody wept, nobody showed the least sign of gloom or perturbation. The place was becoming more and more empty, and I, too, left.

Mobilization was in full swing now. From every direction came young men with suitcases or wooden boxes. They were all going to the railway station. I passed three young men walking together with suitcases in their hands. A car drew up to the kerb, the door opened, and a woman inside invited them to come in and drove them to the railway station. Motor-cycles roared up and down the main streets. Trucks and buses crowded with young men rumbled up and down. Now and then someone from the sidewalk waved and shouted: "*Na Zdar!*" and the men thundered back a loud and prolonged "*Na Zdar, na Zdar!*"

There were no parades of civilians or of soldiers, no bands, no martial music, no hysterics, no dramatics—not the least effort on the part of Government, Army, or any of the civic-minded organizations, like the Sokols, to whip up emotion, or to mobilize it for public display.

"It's war, isn't it?" said a Czech newspaper man as he passed me in the street.

"It looks like it."

"Even Mr. Chamberlain cannot stop us now," he threw back. And with a quick salute he walked off briskly.

At the railway stations the spirit outwardly was as calm as in the street: more and more young men were arriving, alone or escorted

by friends, a number by their mothers. But here, too, no loud weeping; now and then only the sob of a mother as she held her son's hand in hers or kissed him on the cheek. One group of men on the lawn across the street from the station were eating sandwiches, talking aloud and laughing. One man strutted about the railway station in a richly-embroidered costume. A Moravian, he had come to the city in the morning for a visit to friends and hadn't time to go home and change into his everyday clothes.

Gone now was the bitterness and the rage of the day before; the city and the people had become galvanized with hope and triumph. Now they were Czechs again, Slovaks again: now they had something to say about their destiny, and not with cries, sobs, songs, but with powder and steel. In all their history they never had submitted to an enemy without a battle, nor to a friend when the honour and the independence of the nation or the people were involved. France and England had, for one flitting moment, reversed the process and the law of centuries; now that disgrace would be wiped out. Yes, they were a nation, a people, an army, an idea, a civilization. They knew it, felt it, but wouldn't proclaim it to themselves or to the world, as do other nations on such occasions—in parades, in oratory, in martial music, in any kind of artificial or public display. They would be quiet and disciplined and—brave! There was more than hope now for their Republic, their Democracy, their very souls!

Knickerbocker's room had become the meeting-place of American and British journalists. The doors were never locked; there was always a bottle of whisky and a siphon on the table; also paper, a typewriter, a telephone, a radio, all the instruments and conveniences of a journalist's trade. We came in and out of there with the frequency and freedom not of guests but of residents. When I came in this time from a long walk in the streets there were a number of journalists around, smoking and talking of the next possible development in the fantastic swirl of events which they had witnessed in the preceding few days. With his instinct for drama Knickerbocker stood up, rummaged about in his suitcase, found a map of Europe, unfolded it, spread it on the floor and said:

"Come on, everybody, let's look at this map. Maybe it's the last time we'll see it as it now is."

Prophetic words? We wondered! Some of us, especially the English correspondents, clung to the belief that Chamberlain would yet placate Hitler at the expense of Czechoslovakia. So we gathered around the map, squatting down on the floor, or moving our chairs close and stooping over it. Never had a map seemed more exciting and more momentous. Here were the names of the various countries, as we had always seen them—and there in the centre, long, narrow, bumpy, squeezed in like a brick or stone in a wall, was Czechoslovakia! The word with its large and widely-spaced lettering carried endless implications now. Just a sprawling word on the map and yet a storm centre of ideas, intrigues, battles, of and for power politics!

"What I'd like to know," said someone, "is how in hell we're going to get out of Prague if the Germans come in?"

Now the map and the word "Czechoslovakia" were no longer objects of academic speculation or dramatic emotion, but of personal salvation.

"If the Poles and the Hungarians join in the war how in hell are we going to get out?" demanded Whitaker.

"We might stay with the Germans," suggested someone.

"I wouldn't care to take that chance," said someone else. "The Germans might be sore at some of the things I've written; they'll declare me a spy and not even bother to ask me to stand up against the wall."

"They certainly won't hesitate to send any, or all of us, to a concentration camp. Who in hell wants to take his daily bath in a concentration camp?"

"With a little luck we might get into Rumania—that is, if we drive fast enough."

"I'll tell you what, we'll drive to Rumania and get in with the Red Army and report the war from there."

"Swell idea!" shouted Whitaker.

"If only the Reds'll allow us."

"So this is the map of Europe to-day!" half-chanted, half-sighed Knickerbocker. "It's sure to be changed, war or no war."

The telephone rang.

"Lights out," said the telephone operator.

"They're evidently expecting air raids." We went down to the hotel lobby. The heavy curtains were drawn over the immense window that was facing the street. Little lights stuck deep in the ceiling, gave out a yellowish illumination. The place was alive with movement; indistinct only a few steps away, were figures, rushing from table to table, hallway to hallway. Most of these people were journalists from various parts of the world. French correspondents, expecting mobilization at home, had already gone. The English were planning to leave immediately if possible. If there was war—and it could hardly be avoided now—they would be needed at home. Besides, "No use staying here now," said one of them, "it's like committing suicide."

"Do you really think so?" I asked.

"Of course. The Germans will concentrate on Prague. It'll be day and night bombardment from the air at first—then—well, I am not afraid to die if I did it for a purpose or a cause, but it is senseless to commit suicide. I'm leaving to-morrow for Poland or Rumania."

"The best thing, for all of us," said another man, "would be to go to bed. If anything happens we won't know about it and then it won't be suicide."

There was laughter and more wise-cracking; nobody was panicky, just restless and uncertain, and more worried over the ban on telephone and telegraph communication with the outside world than over German air raids. There was one exception—W—, who never forgets his humanitarianism.

"Just crazy," he said, "and needless—the whole thing. These people don't want to fight, they want to work. They are the most work-loving people in the world. I've been here before, lived here for years, studied here. I know them from one end of the country to the other—there's nothing they love so much as work. They'd rather work than drink Pilsener or eat goose and dumplings—if let alone they'd make of Czechoslovakia in a short time a paradise—for all the people. And from all over the world—tourists would come to look at it and say to one another: 'Aren't they such wonderful people, these Czechs. See what they've done—good homes, good food, good schools, good vacation resorts, good entertainment for everybody—and freedom for all—and equality for all—and

security and self-respect for all.' Yes, if let alone these humble and toil-loving Czechs would have achieved it all—and they'd have been an example for the whole world to admire and perhaps to follow. But power politics—Hitler; and our Runciman and our Chamberlain, couldn't they see it was a question of power politics and not of minority rights—and couldn't they, a long time ago, have taken measures to protect and preserve this little island of justice and contentment? Of course they could! But what do our Birmingham merchants care for ideals or democracy! Sending these people to suicide—a brave and harmless people! Well, let's go down and get a drink!"

It was almost five o'clock in the morning when I reached my room. I turned on the lights and had no more than begun to undress when the telephone rang.

"Turn out the lights, please," said the operator.

I turned out the lights and crawled into bed. I wasn't sleepy; I was getting used to going without the normal amount of food or sleep. I got up and looked out of the window. Below was an ocean of darkness—and now and then flashlights hovering about like night insects. In every direction the city was black, and only straight ahead and far away two tiny red lights were gleaming on the top of a building. Perhaps there would be an air raid; perhaps there would be war to-morrow. Europe, more than Prague, was astir with anxiety and fear. The French were mobilizing: the British had mobilized their fleet. The Russians had warned the Poles of trouble if they moved against Czechs. Perhaps Hitler would take the law of history into his own hands. He had said he wouldn't tolerate another Czech mobilization—and this time the mobilization was much more formidable than it had been on May 21st. Would he be as good as his word? If so, any moment we might hear explosions. Knickerbocker had said that the safest place against air raids was the one which was most exposed, preferably the top of the tallest church steeple in the city. It might be the safest but it won't be the most calming. But perhaps power would be wrested from Hitler's hands. Anything might happen!

## Chapter XXI

SEPTEMBER 24 (SATURDAY)

We slept through the night—the few hours of night that remained for sleep—without being awakened by explosive sounds, with no mishaps to our bodies and our surroundings. The expected air raids had not come off. Would they overwhelm us during the day or the coming night? The people in the streets were taking the question very seriously; most of them carried gas-masks around.

At last the American diplomatic representatives were taking the threat of war as seriously as the British. In my mail was a notice from the Consul-General advising immediate departure, and warning that "Americans who insist on remaining do so on their own responsibility." I learned in the lobby of the hotel that this notice was sent to 1087 persons—quite a little colony. The British had gone much further. They had actually chartered a coach to take 60 of His Majesty's subjects to Poland. The train was leaving at 2.40 in the afternoon. At least 100 persons would crowd into that refugee (or was it fugitive?) coach—among them a number of outstanding British journalists who were certain war was coming. Even their Consulate was packed ready to leave; they felt that to remain in Prague was to wait for suicide; they preferred a more uncertain way of dying.

Of the hundred foreign newspaper men in the city a large number were departing; those who were remaining showed no perturbation. Many of them, like Knickerbocker, Delmer, Whitaker, Packard, had covered every war within the past few years, and another war held no special terror for them; they didn't bother about precautions for personal safety, and had not even followed the example of the Czechs in obtaining gas masks and first-aid kits.

These foreign men of the press in Prague were the most cheerful fatalists on earth. Life to them had been one endless swirl of adventure, with the whole world as their home, with the joys of

the flesh—good food, good hotels, good drinks, the best society—at their constant command; with excitement, triumph, chaos, cynicism a part of their daily spiritual fare. They knew neither humiliation nor degradation neither stability nor security; they revered nobody least of all “big men” in politics; they were nomads without flocks, pilgrims without shrines; gamblers who would give away their shirts rather than provide for the wants of to-morrow; soldiers of fortune who never shouldered guns and never expected fortunes; trained observers who now with revulsion, now with amusement, now with wrath, watched and described the scandals, the terror, the meanness of man, and sometime his grandeur—seen and experienced so rarely. What was life to them, or death, or yesterday, or to-morrow, or all eternity, or faith in anything anywhere, except in their own generous impulses?

“Say we died bravely”—laughed the gigantic Sefton Delmer of the *Daily Express* to the lithe MacDonald of the *Times*.

“And nobly,” someone else laughed. That was all. Off they went—those who left for Poland. Those who remained ordered a round of drinks.

The city was the same yet different. Calm, businesslike and self-confident, but like a tree with much of its fruit shaken by a storm during the night. The crowds in the street and in the shops were not so large; young men were scarce. Taxis had disappeared—mobilized for war. In shops and cafés one saw new faces—waiters, porters, other attendants who had taken the place of those who had left for the front. The news-dealer who had said that if Russia were to betray Czechoslovakia like England and France he would turn Fascist and beat hell out of Communists was no longer at his stand. In the parks more and more men were digging deep zigzag trenches. A father was explaining to his two young sons, seven and ten, the meaning of the white arrows on the pavements that showed the way to nearby arcades to which people were to flee when bombs started crashing over the city. Fewer people were walking in the streets with their dogs; they left them at home in bombproof cellars or in other safe places. And here in broad daylight on the Fochova, in the heart of the city, was a strange scene—strange for people with the

reserve and the discipline of Czechs. A milk wagon got stuck climbing up the pavement; the driver couldn't make the horse pull it, so pedestrians, men and women, propped their shoulders and their hands to the rear of the wagon and helped push it, and passers-by on the sidewalk stopped and laughed—loudly. There was nothing amusing in a horse straining itself to pull a wagon free and in people out of the goodness of their heart helping it—yet people stood by and laughed, a laughter of shattered nerves. On the Watslavsky Namesti was another scene: a bootblack had parked himself with his enormous chair, his boxes and brushes in the middle of the sidewalk. He had no customers, so with his coat off he slumped into his chair and fell asleep over a newspaper. Again as people passed they laughed. This, too, was a symptom of jangled nerves.

That was why the military band into which I had run startled me. It was the first I had heard, and it was grossly incompetent. It was not a large band, and it played with neither rhythm nor spirit. The orchestras in the restaurants and cafés are excellent even in the poorer districts. The Czechs, as in everything they did, were mindful chiefly of the fitness of things and of the pleasure of the customers. This band was certainly an exception—perhaps they had not the same gift for bands as for orchestras. At any rate, it heightened neither the excitement nor the martial spirit of the city; I was glad when it turned the corner and disappeared on the Prikopi.

In the afternoon Mrs. Vincent Sheean and I went for tea to Madame P——'s home. Gracious and friendly, Madame P—— escorted us into her large and cheerful sitting-room. Her husband had gone off to the front, and she was glad he had been summoned, because it would have been dreadful to lose their country without even an effort to defend it. She told us of a tenant in the house who was in such a hurry to report for duty that he neglected to turn out the lights in his apartment. The police came and reported it, and a neighbour in haste to turn out the lights crashed into the glass with his bare fists, reached out for the electric button and pressed it. Only then did he realize that the glass had cut a vein in his hand and that the blood was spurting out in a little torrent. Immediately Madame P—— got busy and went for a surgeon, but so many of them had been mobilized that she didn't at once find one to tend her neigh-

bour. But he was well enough now—though at one time she had wondered what might happen to him. He should have taken the time to pry the door open with a tool or to smash the glass with a hammer, but people were so tense they didn't think clearly, they obeyed the first impulse that came to them. Yes, that's how bad it was. But it would be better now, because with the army mobilized people had fresh hope of winning their fight against the enemies of their independence.

As we were talking, two other guests came for dinner, and after Madame P—— had shown them into the room she went out into the hallway and presently returned, carrying in each hand a canvas sack with a bulging object inside. "See," she said, "how people go to dinner parties in Prague. What do you suppose is inside these sacks?" She opened them and showed us the gas masks. Going to dinner parties with gas masks—a new fashion in the world!

One of the guests, a man of about fifty, was in a major's uniform. He was Madame P——'s neighbour, a surgeon, mobilized for service. Of medium height, bald-headed, with glasses, a studious face, a calm resonant voice, he resembled in appearance and manner a college professor more than a soldier. The mobilization, he said, had had a salutary effect on the health of the people. They had got so that they couldn't work, so strained were their nerves and so unsteady their minds. It didn't appear on the surface, but he, as surgeon, knew the havoc this tussle with suspense and uncertainty had wrought in the health of the people. "Action," he said, "any kind of action, is from a medical viewpoint always preferable to anxiety. 'Better end with terror than terror without end,' says a German proverb, and I, as surgeon, can testify to the physiological truth of these words." Then, leaning back in his chair and putting the palms of his hands together and now and then parting and putting them together again, as though to accentuate the logic and the rhythm of his thoughts, he went on reflectively :

"We trusted our friends, that's been our greatest sin. In 1934 and in 1936 we could have signed a non-aggression pact with Germany and saved everything—our lands, our economic well-being, quite a bit of our democracy—and we should have had a favourable trade arrangement with the Germans. But we spurned it all because we treasured our allegiance to our friends higher than our self-interest,

and now these friends are throwing us unceremoniously to the wolves. But maybe we aren't so easy to throw. Maybe."

He stopped, and Madame P—— served tea and coffee. We talked trivialities and laughed; and then, because it was time for a news broadcast, the radio was turned on. The Boy Scouts were requested to come out in full force with first-aid kits—in case something happened. "The streets'll be full of them," said one of the guests, "that's how loyal the kids are." Then there was an announcement that the night would be absolutely dark and no lights would be allowed anywhere. . . .

The surgeon major resumed his remarks: "Look at the difference between us and the Germans. I assure you we're no angels. But we look at things in a practical way. Consider this: The Jews went to Germany in the eleventh century about the same time that the Germans came to our country. The Jews in Germany became completely assimilated to German civilization and regarded themselves as full-fledged Germans and gave their energies and talents, and also their lives, to the preservation of Germany and of German culture, and what does Hitler say now? They are aliens and they must get out, and he and his crowd are doing everything they can to impoverish and degrade them so that they will flee to some other land and leave their property behind.

"But look at our Sudetens. They never cared for our culture. They don't even bother to learn our language. But they came here as immigrants, and we have a much better right to say to them: 'You don't like to live with us—you want to go back to the lands from which your ancestors came? Please go, the doors and the roads are open and, unlike Hitler, we're not going to confiscate your properties. We'll pay full value for everything you leave behind. If you don't trust us in the appraisal of your properties we'll appoint an international commission—appoint it jointly with you—and let them make the appraisal. Could anything be more fair? And we won't inflict any terror on you, as your Hitler does on Jews, or any embarrassment, scarcely any inconvenience; and we'll pay you in sound currency which you can use in any part of the world without any need of obtaining special permission from the national bank or the government for its disposal, as Germans do now under Hitler!' Well, if such a proposition were made, the

most that would want to take advantage of it would be about a million souls. Now Germany has a population of about seventy-five millions; another million wouldn't be difficult to absorb—one person for every seventy-five—and besides Hitler says he is short of workers. Surely he ought to be glad to get them under this arrangement."

"But you talk like a sane human being," someone suggested.

"I hope I am a sane human being. But that's the way Runciman should have talked to Henlein, and Chamberlain should have talked to Hitler."

"Yes," echoed Madame P——, "they should have, but they didn't, because they're interested in Hitler more than they are in us, even though Hitler and Goebbels and the whole German press never stops calling them the vilest names in the world, and even though we stood by them always, and even now are willing to give our lives for them, and for ourselves, too."

Later our hostess asked us:

"Don't you want to go down and see our bombproof cellar?"

"Indeed, yes," said Mrs. Sheean. Madame P—— gave the key to one of her guests, and he went with us to the basement and showed us the cellar. Steam pipes jutted in and out of it, but it was thick and whitewashed and clean, and had a bathroom and tiers of boxes on which to lie or sit, and even a table at which to play cards, and it was large enough to accommodate several families.

The night was dark and blue. Prague had become the bluest city in the world, not in spirit, but in appearance, for only blue lights were allowed, and these of only small dimensions. Automobiles had blue lights; streetcars, motorcycles, bicycles had blue lights; the sausage stands had their lanterns draped in blue paper; the automatic restaurant was so blue that it dimmed even my good eyes; the cafés and restaurants—everything, everywhere, was sheathed and glazed with blue. As I walked along the street I saw the moving little flashlights with their blue rings of light crawling and flying around like strange and illuminated insects. The rooms in the hotel had likewise been fixed with blue lights so dismal that one could hardly see one's way to bed. All the other

lights were taken out or shut off. Only the bathrooms were left with ordinary lights, and as I walked into mine and left the door open I found myself immediately summoned on the telephone and told to shut my door or loose the privilege of a good light in the bathroom. I quickly shut the door. Henceforth with the coming of darkness I lived, in the hours when I was home, in the bathroom—wrote there, read there, ate there, drank there, entertained friends there—and was glad that, unlike my Czech friends, I had at least the bathroom into which to withdraw after dark. Many of them had no lights at all in their homes; some of them not even the blue lights which the hotel management had put into the rooms of foreign journalists.

"What do you do at night?" I asked a seventeen-year-old Czech girl.

"Oh, you'd be surprised! Even Mamma, who is fifty, likes to play games in the dark—games of hide-and-seek, and it's lots of fun. Mamma laughs more now than she's laughed for a long time."

Though we'd been cut off from the outside world, with neither telephone nor telegraph any longer at our disposal, we managed to pick up important items of news now on the radio and from officials in high authority. Chamberlain and Hitler couldn't come to an agreement—and that was why Chamberlain flew to England; the French Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister would fly to London for another conference; the memorandum which Chamberlain received from Hitler was immediately forwarded to Prague, and this time with no ultimatum that it accept the terms. Mr. Chamberlain is credited with having said, "It's now up to the Czechs," which, translated into everyday language, meant that the Czechs would be idiots to accept it. The fact that the day before the British and the French ministers in Prague had recommended "military measures with discretion" and "mobilization with discretion" spoke eloquently for Chamberlain's disappointment with Hitler's freshly inflated appetites. The French were calling out more men and now had about a million under colours; and had called on the population of Paris to leave the city without delay and find residence in the country. In London, squads of men were digging trenches; thousands and thousands were trying on

gas masks for the first time. Somerset House, repository of vital documents, was being sandbagged. Other buildings were likewise being barricaded. Surely now the British and the French meant to fight, and not only they: Russia was ready, and had given stiff warning to Poland not to move against the Czechs. Yugoslavia and Rumania had declared themselves prepared to uphold the agreement of the Little Entente; Turkey had announced that she wouldn't be in opposition to England. One after another nations were openly taking sides, and not against England—that is, not against Czechoslovakia. The tide, then, was swelling higher and higher, more and more mighty, more and more threatening—against Hitler.

Perhaps there was more to Knickerbocker's theory of the British making themselves ready to pull a rabbit out of somebody's hat than mere brilliance of fantasy. Not for a long time had British prestige mounted so high in Europe and in the world as it had in the past few days. Round the Prime Minister had crystallized the support of outraged humanity, of finely calculated self-interest, of all the mistrusts and fears and hates against Hitler. From day to day, from hour to hour, this support was swelling in magnitude and intensity. Chamberlain had suddenly blossomed into a world hero; even the masses of the German people had accorded him a heartfelt ovation as a messenger of peace. Surely now, as a matter of personal self-esteem and national prestige, he couldn't possibly retreat farther than to Berchtesgaden—perhaps not even any farther than the English Channel and the geographic *status quo* in Czechoslovakia. This is what a number of journalists felt, Americans among them; they had sought desperately to keep alive their old esteem for England; now they found for it a fresh vindication. England was England again; rich in experience, wisdom, decisiveness—spokesman of an everswelling chorus of defiance of the Nazi dictator.

Then I ran into the "General." I had seen him first, months earlier, soon after my arrival in Prague. He had been sitting in the lobby of the hotel with his back towards me, drinking coffee and talking to a blonde girl with a sharp-featured and unhappy face and two superbly-groomed dogs on the floor at her feet. His back was enormous and was crowned with a large head. While the head kept

bobbing up and down turning and twisting as of a man engaged in animated conversation, the back remained as immovable as the trunk of an old and sturdy tree. My curiosity aroused, I had glanced at him sharply as I passed the table at which he was sitting. His handsome face was smooth and flushed and too broad for the small chin with the thick fold of flesh underneath and with the deep gash on the right jaw, probably the result of a duel or a war wound. There were chivalry and kindness and pride in the man's expression, in his big mouth and in his passionate eyes. His voice sounded choked, as though it had lost its resonance, and he spoke English with a thick accent. It was obvious that he was a man who loved good food, good drink, good society, and who was always aware of his bearing and his manner; a European nobleman, perhaps, in the pre-war sense of the word—a man with more concern in the joys of to-day than in the faith of to-morrow, and glad enough to let the world spin around on its own axis at whatever speed and in whichever direction it chose: a real epicurean, with no love of abstract discussion, perhaps only with an abhorrence of movements and ideologies and salvation—for himself even more than for the world.

I had seen him often, chiefly in the lobby of the hotel. Then I met him. He was a giant of a man, towering high above any of us, with the springy and graceful step of a well-poised athlete and the erect posture of a soldier. By birth he was a Central European, a soldier of rank in the World War, an intellectual, a man of the world, with a knowledge of so many languages that I never could remember the precise number. He was on the staff of one of the largest newspapers in the world, with a love of his calling and with scarcely any respect for the men in it. He had fine manners and was as polite to the waiter and the elevator boy as to a close friend. For any service rendered to him, even if it was only taking him up in the elevator, he always pressed a few crowns into the attendant's hand. His tongue was soaked now in honey, now in acid; and the acid was more memorable than the honey.

Since the beginning of the fresh crisis I had run into him often and talked to him of politics, and listened with enjoyment to his caustic comments on the men who were governing the world. Now, on my return from the darkened street into the darkened lobby, I

almost bumped into him standing by the coach and eating an apple. I called him "General" because, more than any person I had ever known, he fitted the image I had always had of a general.

"You haven't gone off to Poland?" I said.

"Gone! Why?" And for an instant he stopped chewing his apple.

"Other men have left—especially the English."

"They make me tired, these journalists. They hear a story and they shoot it right off without bothering to ask themselves whether it has any sense. They don't think, that's all. That's why they get panicky and run off. I tell you no man should be allowed to wear pants if he cannot think, and that should apply to newspapermen as well as to others."

"For an Englishman it might be quite tough if the Germans swooped down on Prague."

"But who said there would be war?"

His question startled me a little, and I said, "You mean Hitler will yield?"

"I mean nothing of the sort. I mean Chamberlain has yielded already—everything."

"But," I remonstrated, "Chamberlain left Godesberg, and before leaving he communicated with Hitler only by mail, and he dropped word to these people that they had better mobilize; and they're in dead earnest, these Czechs are."

"Too dead earnest; that's the trouble with them; that's why they get fooled so easily. There's a Hungarian proverb which says there are no greater liars in the world than horse traders, people who apply for divorce, and diplomats."

"This time Chamberlain has made a stand, and with mobilization going on in so many countries, especially in France—Besides, didn't Hitler say that he never would stand for another Czech mobilization like that of the 21st of May? And this mobilization is far more complete—"

The "General" bit off a mouthful of apple, chewed it quickly and swallowed it and laughed cynically.

"The trouble with you, my dear fellow, is that you are a literary man. You may know people, but you don't know diplomats. I do; and I tell you all talk of war is silly."

"I cannot imagine Hitler yielding," I insisted.

"But I've told you that Hitler and Chamberlain understand each other too well. It's all over but the shouting. If Chamberlain has agreed to make the Czechs give up territory for the sake of peace, do you for a moment imagine that he'll go back on his agreement for the sake of war? The fact of his taking Hitler's memorandum for transmission to the Czechs shows he hasn't turned down all the fresh proposals Hitler has made; he only pretends he has. Perhaps he doesn't even pretend. Don't be silly; don't talk of war. Chamberlain never would have accepted the memorandum for transmission to the Czechs if he hadn't endorsed its conditions—at least in his heart. It's all at the expense of these brave and foolishly trustful Czechs. They still think that the friends who betrayed them will help them; that's how gullible they are, all of them, including Benes. Stupid! In private life if people betray you it's impossible to go on being friendly with them. Would you be friends with people who betrayed you—knowingly, deliberately, brutally? I wouldn't. Never; especially if they didn't even get the thirty pieces of silver. No, there'll be no war. It's finished. These people are betrayed, and nobody can save them, because their friends don't want to save them. The chapter is ended. You can go to bed and not even think of air raids like the rest of the damned fools running around the city and trying to scheme some way of sending out another war story—another lie. . . . And now"—his face softened, and he smiled like a man who is too sure of himself to bother even to listen to another man's opinion—"let's have a sandwich and another apple."

I didn't agree with the "General"; the Prime Minister couldn't possibly be so wholly void of a sense of obligation to these brave, trustful, martyred Czechs.

It was five in the morning when I reached the radio station for my broadcast to America. It was so pitch dark that now and then in crossing a street I had to hold out my hands and say "*Pozor!* (*Look out!*)" to keep from bumping into people. I had neglected to buy a flashlight, and the blue little lights twinkling before me made me all the more confused. Finally I reached the radio building. At the door were soldiers with helmets and guns with fixed

bayonets. My credentials were examined by flashlight before I was admitted inside. I learned that there was a new censor on duty, a short, stolid-looking, sharp-featured woman, who spoke bad English and who didn't seem much in the mood for conversation. I had heard from Kerr of the New York *Herald Tribune* that she was "impossible." She had cut out so much of his story that in disgust he had refused to broadcast. I gave her my script. With a red pencil she cut out every word of conversation with Czechs which she construed as unfriendly to Germany.

"But d'you ever listen to the German broadcasts and all the things they say about your people? What I'm saying is a fact—I am only reporting opinions I've gathered and the way your people feel."

"This is a government station. The government is responsible for everything you say—even if you do broadcast for an American company."

"But aren't the German stations also government-owned? Doesn't the government pay the men who broadcast? And yet, only this morning—"

"I know, I know," she said, "but we aren't Germany, and we don't want to antagonize anybody."

"Good Lord! Antagonize anybody. When they call you barbarians, liars, bandits and—"

"I am sorry. These passages will have to come out."

"But they are facts; everybody knows them."

She didn't answer, which only further exasperated me. "I suppose I'll do what Kerr of the *Tribune* did—refuse to broadcast."

Again no answer. But my threat not to broadcast must have surprised her; she made no more marks with her red pencil on my manuscript.

"Do you know what's wrong with the Czechs?" asked an American journalist of one of the managers of the radio station.

"No, tell me."

"They think they must act like angels when they ought to know that they would gain more of the world's respect if they forgot the angels and did what their enemies are always doing—remember only the devils!"

## Chapter XXII

SEPTEMBER 25 (SUNDAY)

ANOTHER brilliant day with lots of sun and breeze. Crowds poured into the street in Sunday clothes and, because of the predominance of women, with more colour than I had seen among Prague promenaders. Perhaps to cheer themselves, or as a reaction to the darkness of the nights, women put on their most festive dresses. The river was smooth and shimmered in the sun and was alive with sailing craft. The hills, the castles, the woods were magically lovely. But—everybody carried a gas mask!

I called on the C—s. Madame C— was aflutter with happiness. Two of her nieces, one a university graduate and the other studying law, had come to Prague to join the Red Cross and were staying with her. I must meet them: both spoke English, one with an English accent because she had been in England, and the other with an American accent because she had for three years been studying with an American instructor. They had gone for a walk, but they would soon return, and I must wait and meet them. Meanwhile, would I have tea or coffee or something else? As we were drinking tea, the two nieces came in. Both were in their early twenties, both short, broad of build, with lively faces and a real Czech manner of polite reserve. Both were interested in books, and the latest one they had read was *Gone with the Wind*. I said I hadn't read it—had only glanced through it; they seemed shocked. In Czechoslovakia every one who liked books had read it or was reading it, in English, in German or Czech; and surely in America people were also reading it—so they imagined—and here was I, a writer, and was not ashamed to admit I hadn't read it! . . . But had I read Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms*? In Czech *S Bohem Armada* and in Russian *Proshshei Oroozhie*, the title conveys a dramatic majesty that is lacking in English. This time I nodded with enthusiasm. Yes, I had read the novel several times! They, too, had read it, but it hadn't had a sweeping success

in Czechoslovakia. The people who read it were immensely stirred. The older girl with sombre blue eyes and with straight light-brown hair, the ends of which she had curled upward, and with a light and soothing voice said: "I have often wondered what sort of a man he is, this Mr. Hemingway. I have seen his picture, but can't visualize him. He doesn't look as tough as he sounds in his book. I wish some of these authors whom we read would come to our country for a visit. I'd love to see Mr. Hemingway, Miss Mitchell and Mr. Sinclair Lewis. We like authors in this country, don't we, Aunt? Yes, we adore them! And we don't really care what nationality they are. If we like their books we adore them, and we'd love to see them in the flesh."

We kept talking about American writers and said not one word about Benes, Sirovy, Chamberlain or Hitler. Only, as I rose to go, Madame C— said, "I suppose you have a gas mask?"

"We got ours yesterday," said the younger girl.

"But perhaps we won't need them," I said, remembering the emphatic words of the "General" the night before.

"Let's hope so," said Madame C—, "but—one after another my hopes have been dashed to pieces, and I daren't trust them any more."

"If France and England don't help us," said the younger girl with earnestness, "Russia will. The Russians are Slavs, and they understand us better than the French or the English."

"No," said the older girl, "Hitler isn't going to get anything from us now. Sirovy wouldn't have mobilized if he hadn't intended to tell Hitler he can't get an inch of our historic lands without fighting—and the Germans don't want to fight. Hitler's bluffing. There'll be a revolution in Germany if Hitler starts a war."

"Suppose there isn't," I said, looking at the girl and noticing the increasing earnestness of her expression. "Suppose," I went on a little cruelly—"suppose Hitler starts a war and there is no revolution and you fight and nobody helps you?"

I knew this thought was bothering a number of Czech officials.

"Then," answered the aunt with pride and decisiveness, "then we die, what of it!"

"Why," asked the older girl, "must the English have such old

men as Runciman and Chamberlain run their government? Why couldn't they have a brave man like Eden back?"

"Runciman isn't in the government," I interrupted.

"Whether he is or not, he's helping Chamberlain, and he never understood us or what's been happening here. He's only been here to help Henlein and Hitler."

"It's all right," said the aunt again, "we're Czechs—we can stand on our own feet; we can fight on our own feet, and die on our own feet. It's happened before." She smiled a pale, heart-breaking smile.

I received a transcript of the Czech version of the events that had led to the general mobilization. It said:

"On September 21 the Czechoslovak government accepted the official British and French proposals, which included the cession, after the demarcation of the new borders by an international commission, of the Sudeten territories.

"The government accepted these conditions only because this course was advised by the governments of Great Britain and France, who added that, should we not accept this offer, France could not keep her word to assist us as an ally, and that England would no longer show an effective interest in the fate of Czechoslovakia. So as not to be accused of having hindered the possibility of creating peace in Europe, and thus for all the world, we accepted the conditions.

"As soon as the British Prime Minister placed our acceptance before the German Chancellor at Godesberg, entirely different proposals were submitted to him. These went much further than was agreed at Berchtesgaden. The usual technique of following every concession by increased demands once more became apparent.

"While receiving these new conditions at Godesberg, Mr. Chamberlain was already aware that neither the French nor the British government would be able to advise Czechoslovakia to accept them, and that they could no longer advise the Czech government to remain passive and not to prepare for self-defence.

"Therefore at 6.15 in the afternoon on Friday, British and French ministers in Prague made a statement to the Czechoslovakian government that they must accept the new conditions or face war.

slovak government, upon instructions from their own governments, to the effect that they could no longer take the responsibility of advising us to remain passive, and that they couldn't recommend that we shouldn't make preparations of a military nature. Immediately afterwards, at 8 p.m., the Czech government concluded that the international situation demanded that preparations for defence should be made.

"Surely nobody will believe that the mobilization of small Czechoslovakia could constitute a menace to any one. We repeat with all possible emphasis that this step was not taken against the advice and without the knowledge of the Great Powers, and that the propaganda which tries to put a different complexion on the matter is entirely false, and is intended not to preserve but to wreck peace."

A more sober and dignified declaration could hardly be made. The German radio and press were bombarding Czechoslovakia with abuse, but the Czechs would allow no foreign broadcaster to say a word derogatory of Germany or even of Goebbels—chief power behind the Nazi campaign of vilification; and in their own broadcasts, likewise, not a word of denunciation, not a breath of anger or resentment—gentlemen to the end, even in the midst of the greatest threat to everything they were and loved!

The Czechs were not the only ones making announcements on the radio. Mussolini had also been making speeches during the day, and in Padua he declared that the Czechs had until October 1 to decide whether to accept or reject the Godesberg memorandum.

A newspaper wit, after picking up the Mussolini speech on the radio, turned to his colleagues and said:

"What's the difference between an ultimatum and a memorandum?"

"When issued by the alleged friends of Czechoslovakia, it's an ultimatum; when issued by Hitler, it's a memorandum."

"No," replied the correspondent. "I'll tell you the difference. When you are ordered to do something in six hours, it's an ultimatum, and in six days it's a memorandum."

"Which is Godesberg?" somebody asked.

"That's what I'd like to know," snapped the wit, and dashed

out of the blueness of the lobby, into the bluer dimness of the streets.

Well then, the French Cabinet was against the Godesberg memorandum; the British Cabinet didn't approve of it. The Czech government, on the advice of Great Britain and France, with the French minister in Prague—M. de la Croix—suggesting "military measures with discretion," and the British minister in Prague—Mr. Newton—using the words "mobilization with discretion"—so a member of the Czech Cabinet had told me—had carried through a swift and effective mobilization. The French continued to call out reserves; the British were hastening to make ready for eventualities, and Russia—so we were told—was keeping a huge army at the Polish border, and several thousand planes; while the Hungarians and the Poles had of a sudden become barely articulate. With this overwhelming array of facts before me, I went to the "General," who was sitting on the couch of the hotel.

"Have you undergone a change of heart?" I asked.

"What do you mean?"

"Do you still think it is all bluff that Chamberlain has actually agreed with Hitler on a final solution?"

"My dear Hindus, don't forget the Hungarian saying which I quoted the other day."

"About horse traders, applicants for divorce, and diplomats having a special aptitude for lying?"

"Precisely."

"So you still think it's all over with these people?"

"Absolutely. Now look here—"

"O.K., General," I said, and started for the elevator.

"Don't run away," coaxed the "General," "and don't feel so disgusted: you'll have time enough for that when the real truth comes out, as it will, in a few days. Come back and let's talk."

I went back and sat down on a chair facing the "General," who sat on the couch. It was early morning, and save for the porter and the elevator boy there was nobody in the lobby. The "General" finished eating a peach; he wrapped the stone carefully in a white paper napkin and gave it to the bellboy to throw away. His large white apple he tossed several times in the air as though it were a ball.

"Well?" I said; my voice must have sounded defiant.

Smiling, the "General" said, "My dear fellow, you're just like these poor Czechs—you are too trustful."

"Now, look here," I said, "if I believed what you believe I'd become the most rabid anti-Britisher in the world—I've always had immense admiration for the British."

"Nonsense! Don't let your emotions run away with you."

"It's impossible!" I interrupted irritably. "Just impossible! It isn't fixed up."

"If it isn't, it will be, I tell you; the date doesn't matter."

"Not on Hitler's terms."

"Of course on Hitler's terms—nobody'll stop him. These people alone cannot fight him, and nobody'll help them——"

"But—the mobilization in France—the British fleet—the Prime Minister's statement: 'It's up to the Czechs,' which means, 'Now we'll stand by your defiance.'"

Calmly and with a smile of triumph—or was it only amusement?—the "General" said, "Don't forget the Hungarian saying—about horse traders, applicants for divorce, and diplomats."

"I cannot share your cynicism," I said.

"Morals don't count in politics—not even with the British—not this time, anyway. Make up your mind to that."

"Maybe this time at last, after Chamberlain's experience at Berchtesgaden and Godesberg, morals and common sense *will* count——"

"It's marvellous to have such faith. We'll see what'll happen to it in a few days." Then he went on: "They are finished, these people are—and I don't want to be hard on them, but I must say they made a lot of blunders: they were clumsy in the way they handled the Germans here. In Carlsbad, at the railway station, they once had a Czech cashier who didn't speak German. Think of it! In Carlsbad—a purely German city. Here in Prague—an international city—the signs everywhere are only in Czech——"

"In France, they're only in French, and in America they're only in English."

"Yes, but this is different, because this city has always had a dual culture. They should have been a little more diplomatic, not only with the Germans but with the other minorities——"

This time I exploded! "Of course they should have been more tactful! But has anybody ever been so tactful with minorities? Why, the Hungarian peasant, who according to the Hungarian propagandists is being cut to pieces by the Czechs at least a dozen times a day, never even knew how to conserve his cow manure until the Czechs came along and taught him. That shows how tactless they have been."

The "General's" nerves had evidently been as taut as mine, for he, too, exploded with rage. "Who ever said a word about the Hungarians—why are you talking about them?"

"Yes, my dear General, only now, after the Czechs have taught him, does the Hungarian peasant know how to conserve his cow manure, and not only that, but he knows how to raise a pig, and he still has to learn to take proper care of a cow. Minorities be damned!"

"But who ever said a word about Hungarians? What are you talking about?" His eyes flashed with rancour and, as if to hold it back, he arose, walked about, tossed his apple higher and higher and went on in a choked voice: "It's a lie, a lie! I never said a word about the Hungarians—"

"Yes, and look at the Slovaks! In twenty years the Czechs have brought more civilization to them than the old Hungarian monarchy had in one thousand years. Look at the schools and the roads and the hospitals the Czechs have built! And the real educated Slovak knows it. It's only the petty Slovak intellectual—"

"But I said nothing about Slovaks and Hungarians, not a word—"

"Well, if you didn't you might as well from the way you talked about minorities. . . . Of course the Czechs made mistakes, lots of mistakes, but think what they have accomplished."

"But I didn't—I didn't! You're a liar! What a liar—and I thought you were a writer, an intelligent man, and not a newspaperman! You're like the others. I never want to see you—I never want to speak to you—" His voice was so choked that words came out with difficulty and with a hiss; and this time, instead of tossing the apple into the air, he dropped it into his pocket and merely waved his fists up and down. "What a stupid

man! . . . Hungarians! . . . Slovaks! . . . Not a word did I say about them! Oh, how dreadful! . . ."

I had impeached his sense of honour, and he was aroused to fury. I realized now the absurdity of the whole discussion, and knew at once that it was a case of shattered nerves in both cases.

. . . Yet I was in no hurry and in no mood to apologize. Unable to say another word, so overcome was he with wrath, the "General" dashed into the elevator and went up to his room.

I went for a walk and then returned to the hotel and stepped into the elevator. An American correspondent, his face flushed, and humming a tune, also went in.

"Where is your gas mask?" asked the elevator man.

"I haven't got one yet."

"No?"

"I'll get it to-morrow morning."

"See where mine is." He pointed to a tin can under the bench in the elevator.

"If there's an air raid to-night," said the American, "and I get my head blown off, it'll save someone the job of waking me in the morning."

"You won't need any breakfast brought to you, either," I added.

"Hell, no!"

I translated this dialogue to the elevator man.

"People shouldn't talk like that," he said in a ruffled and deprecating voice.

"We only said it for fun," I explained.

The elevator man shook his head and replied, "It isn't right to talk like that."

My room looked unbearably dismal. The blue streak of illumination that came from the headlight seemed like the gleam of an Evil Eye that delighted in tormenting me—surest possible evidence that, in spite of outward calm, deep inside of me the strain was destroying my composure. Quickly I turned out the light, snatched the feather blanket from the bed, the feather pillow, spread both on the bathroom floor and, after taking off my shoes but not my clothes, I lay down and forgot myself in a detective story which John Whitaker had given me.

## Chapter XXIII

SEPTEMBER 26 (MONDAY)

"WE'LL GO NUTS," said one American journalist, "if we don't get away from this hullabaloo long enough to take a deep breath of fresh air." That's the way a good many of us felt on Monday the 26th, when the forces of conspiracy, threat, conjecture, audacity, timidity and sheer fatalism were keeping the whole world in a state of bewilderment. That's the way Knickerbocker must have felt when he took me by the arm as we came out of the Forepress office and said: "We'll just slip away, Maurice, you and I, to Barrandorf and have a real lunch."

No proposal could have been more welcome.

Barrandorf is pitched high on a rock overlooking the river and the city—perhaps the most picturesque restaurant in all Europe. It was empty when we arrived, and for two hours we had the enormous and sun-flooded indoor dining-room to ourselves. Then we started back for the city.

On our way, as the driver stopped for the traffic signal to change, Whitaker exclaimed: "Look, fellows! Look at that fat guy! He's had one over the eight! Isn't he happy!"

We looked out of the car. Staggering all over the sidewalk was the most comical drunk I had ever seen. Tall, fat, with hips bulging out of tight trousers, a stiff brown hat drawn low over his forehead, a huge cigar in his mouth, he was apparently trying to carry out literally Lenin's formula of "three steps forward, two steps backward," only that his feet, as nimble as a squirrel's, appeared to be floating in the air every time he staggered forward or backward: they always got ahead of his eyes, and once in attempting to keep them from disobeying his will he lost his hat, and the dance he performed in trying to pick it up wrung roars of laughter from us. Though traffic lights had cleared, we told the chauffeur to draw up to the curb so that we could enjoy the

performance. The drunk himself seemed to enjoy it as much as we, for he never ceased smiling. . . . Then a girl passed by, and instantly he reached out with his hand and slapped her on the hips. She jumped and laughed, while he, with his hand outstretched as though aiming for her again, swerving in circles all over the sidewalk, followed her. Turning, she gave him a light push, but he only broadened his laugh and, with his hand still outstretched and with his eyes on her hips, he kept up the pursuit. Again she laughed and gave him another push and disappeared inside a shop. But he still imagined her before him, for with his hand outstretched as before, he continued to circle all over the sidewalk. Then another woman passed by and, with a burst of laughter, he aimed, though unsuccessfully, his outstretched hand at *her* hips.

"Swell show, kid!" shouted Whitaker, as he roared with laughter.

The trip was a merry interlude in a day of endless agitation and vexation.

When we reached the hotel the English papers had already arrived. For the first time I read the full, though unofficial, text of Hitler's memorandum. It more than confirmed the reports that its conditions by far exceeded the concession of the Anglo-French proposals. It barred the international guarantee of the new frontiers of Czechoslovakia which the Anglo-French proposals had stipulated. It demanded the occupation of the territory to be annexed to the Reich by October 1, and everything was to be left as it was. The appendix relating to this stipulation was one of the most devastating features of the memorandum. The land "is to be handed over without destroying, or rendering unusable in any way, military, economic or traffic establishments. These include the ground organization of the air service and all wireless stations. All economic and traffic materials, especially rolling stock of the railway system, in the designated areas are to be handed over unchanged. The same applies to all utility services (gasworks, power stations, etc.). Finally, no foodstuffs, goods, cattle, raw materials, etc., are to be moved."

The Czechs, therefore, couldn't salvage a crown's worth of the

enormous investments they had made in the Sudeten lands in the twenty years of the Republic. Presumably private possessions would be legally honoured, but if it was dangerous for some to remain there and they had to flee, these might be confiscated, or sold at a price which under ordinary business circumstances no owner in his right mind would consider. Even if they had the time, which they hadn't, to move their plants to Czech territory, they were forbidden by the memorandum to do so. Roads, fortifications, railways, rolling stock, factories, power works, electric plants, private and public buildings and all available foodstuffs were to be left behind. According to this arrangement a Czech farmer who might want to move to Czechoslovakia would be barred from taking with him his pig, his cow, his goat and even his reserves of winter food for himself and his family. The fortifications on which the country had spent about three hundred million dollars—an enormous sum for such a small nation—with at least part of their equipment, were to be confiscated and turned over to Germany as a gift. These terms in their economic demands were harsher than Versailles had imposed on the Central Powers at the end of the World War, for Versailles made obligatory the payment for all state properties taken over by the Allies.

The other provisions likewise couldn't but rouse fierce hostility among the Czechs and bear out their universal belief that Hitler's aim was to snuff out the independence of their land and cripple it economically beyond hope of restoration. The railway line would be cut between Prague and Brno and Bratislava, the capitals of Moravia and Slovakia. Coal would be cut off and pulp also. And it would all need to be done quickly, without giving Czechs and others a chance to make a proper adjustment with their savings, their properties, their jobs—anything. If they were unfriendly to Henlein they would have to flee for their lives. Worse yet: many purely Czech territories would become a part of the Reich, with a Czech population of about eight hundred thousand, and without the least suggestion of any nationality rights to them, even schools in their own language. Nor was there a word on reciprocity in the matter of political prisoners. The memorandum demanded the release of all Sudeten political offenders, but men-

tioned not a word about the release from German jails of the numerous customs officials and gendarmes who had been kidnapped and taken to the Reich.

No wonder one Czech editor in commenting on the memorandum to a group of foreign journalists said bitterly: "This is Versailles, only much worse and Versailles, remember, was imposed by victors on a conquered, demoralized, famished nation. But we have not even fought, and we have more food and an infinitely higher morale than Germany has. . . Scandalous! Just look here"—and he pointed with his swift and bony fingers to a map. "We'd be like a head without a body, and that is as bad as a body without a head. We'd cease to function as a living organism. We'd be absolutely at the mercy of Hitler and much worse than we ever had been under the Hapsburgs. We fight to the last man and woman—yes, we do."

Armed with the details of this memorandum and with a statement in an editorial in the London *Times* that the mere demand for an evacuation of the Sudeten lands by October 1 made the memorandum "incapable of fulfilment," I searched for the "General." After apologizing for my loss of temper the preceding evening, I said: "There now! Even the London *Times* is displeased. And think how the Czechs feel about it all!"

He laughed aloud. "I'll see you in a few days. I tell you these people are lost and there's no hope for them."

Now I laughed at the sheer absurdity of the man's words.

Hitler was to speak that evening, and the correspondents had arranged to hear him on the radio in Knickerbocker's room. To provide ourselves with light, I went down to buy candles, and in shop after shop they had not a candle on sale. They were sold out. Finally, in a back-street drugstore, I found a box with half a dozen candles, and I bought them all. We drew the curtains and draped them over the windows and lit our candles. We could open no window, for our lights would show and we should be told to put them out. So we sat in a dimly-lighted room, made more dim by clouds of smoke, and waited for the speech. At last it came, and we strained our ears to hear it. The transmission was superb, and we could hear every word and every shout of the Fuehrer.

"The Sudeten Germans are marching in!" A tempest of wild welcome and "Heils" in Berlin, and in our candlelit room from some dim corner came a Southern voice:

"Alabama, twenty-four votes for Underwood."

Then Goebbels spoke: "The people are ready," and someone near me whispered "To die," and laughed.

Still, I wondered at the moment if the passion for death was not as innate in the crowd-man as the passion for life in the individual man.

"Leader, command, and we follow!" came Goebbels' impassioned voice over the air. Then Hitler spoke—compliments for the Poles:

"There was danger that the Poles and Germans would regard each other as enemies. I wanted to prevent that . . . I shouldn't have been successful if Poland had been a democracy on Western lines. . . . We are two nations, which shall live, and neither of which shall be able to do away with the other. . . ."

"The Poles will love that," someone said. "They'll remember the words, too."

Then came fierce attacks on Benes and shouts in the hall of "Hang him!"—"Bloodhound!"—and ripples of laughter in our little room.

"The Nazis are never so funny," said someone, "as when they shout for blood."

Then again:

"And now we see the figures: one day 10,000 (driven by Benes) from the Sudeten lands; on the following day, 20,000; on the next, 37,000. Again, two days later, 42,000—78,000. Now they are 90,000, 137,000; and to-day they are 214,000."

"Clever boy, Benes," someone whispered. "In a few more days the whole Sudeten problem will be settled by him. He'll simply drive out all the Germans from the Sudeten country and give them to Hitler as a gift."

There was more laughter—rather loud now; but it subsided quickly, for presently we heard:

"I have now demanded that after twenty years Herr Benes shall be forced to face the truth. He will have to hand over this area by October 1."

So that was the challenge! No negotiations, no retrenchment, no equivocation, not the slightest gesture of reconciliation. Either Godesberg to the least detail or—?

Now we could sleep in peace until October 1—just four and a half nights!

## Chapter XXIV

SEPTEMBER 27 (TUESDAY)

IN THE afternoon, while passing a bookshop, I saw two men pasting on the inside of a large plate-glass window narrow strips of paper.

"Why do you do it?" I asked one man.

"So as to protect the glass from falling to pieces if a bomb crashes near it."

On looking around I observed that many people had already pasted up their windows with narrow bands of paper, and others were now doing it, and not only in shops but in apartment houses.

This was only one manifestation of war preparations on the part of the civilian population. They expected war now more than ever. Hitler's speech seemed to leave them no other alternative. All Prague had listened to the dictator's fulminations against their country and their President, and while outwardly they were calm and refrained even from speaking in harsh language of the Nazis or their leaders, inwardly they were as bitter as they were resolute. So, with energy, they went about preparing themselves against military attacks.

On the Prikopi I met Madame C—— and her younger niece. They, too, were out shopping. They were buying a kerosene stove, candles, darkening paper for the windows and a number of articles for their "trunk."

"What trunk?" I asked.

"In case we have to leave town suddenly—we must be ready." So they were holding a trunk in readiness, packed with necessities—blankets, underwear, blouses, sugar, chocolates, jams and canned foods. Every family was preparing such a trunk or would prepare it: that was why women were again crowding the shops.

In the parks more and more men were digging zigzag trenches.

"Nice down there?" I said to one digger.

"You bet!" he said. "It is cool, anyway, if you don't have to work."

I asked him if I could come down.

"Of course."

So I joined him. The earth was cool and fresh and smelled of dampness, and the trench was so wide that, unless too crowded, a person could sit or even lie in it with comfort.

Meanwhile the War Ministry and all its allied organizations was thronged with volunteers. Men in good health, even if over forty, were offering themselves for service at the front, and so were youths under twenty. The patriotism of the country had indeed reached proportions with which the established organizations could hardly cope. There were more volunteers for every possible service than the government could at the moment accept. Within the three days since the general mobilization three thousand women had offered themselves for blood transfusions. Many foreigners were likewise offering themselves for service, especially Slavs.

Trucks were thundering up and down the city filled with soldiers and military equipment. I saw one truck which bore the inscription: "WE ARE CHILDREN OF ZHIZKA"; another with the words: "WE SHALL NOT RETREAT AN INCH"; still another with the legend: "WE'D RATHER DIE THAN LOSE OUR FREEDOM." Civilians waved at the soldiers and shouted, "Na Zdar!" and the soldiers waved back and smiled and also shouted, "Na Zdar!" On one truck I saw the bayonets decorated with huge red roses.

There was no mistaking the determination of these people, soldiers and civilians, to defend the whole scheme of civilization which the Republic had created. Democracy, freedom, tolerance, humanitarianism were no idle words in this land: no mere clichés for the politician, the soldier, the statesman to whip up allegiance and a fighting spirit. They were an organic part of the thoughts, the feelings, the very blood of the people. Nobody needed to remind them what they would lose if Germany obtained a political or military hold on their country. There were no mass meetings, no orations, no parades, no patriotic song fests: not even a conspicuous display of the national flag. None of these external symbols and stimulations was brought into play, none needed. Faith, consecration, readiness for sacrifice peered out of every face one saw. I

neither saw nor heard of a single woman, wife or mother, who wept much because a husband or son had gone to the front. I heard many a young woman express her regret that she wasn't a man so that she, too, could go off to battle. I remembered the words of a close friend of the British Prime Minister when I saw her in June on my way to Czechoslovakia: "Czechoslovakia is so torn by minorities," she had said, "that the people wouldn't even fight for their independence." Wouldn't they? They would not only fight, but die—and not only for their independence, but for everything it meant to them.

An eminently practical people, with no love of abstract ideas or dramatic lamentation, they had girded themselves for the supreme test of their lives.

## Chapter XXV

SEPTEMBER 28 (WEDNESDAY)

MORE AND MORE appeals and regulations to the citizens. They were warned against spies and were requested not to talk in the presence of people they didn't know or, in response to inquiries from strangers, tell where their sons or husbands had gone or where their letters came from. Yet there was no spy scare in the city. People didn't view foreigners in their midst with suspicion, and those of us who had friends among Czechs were as welcome to their homes as we had ever been throughout our stay in the country.

People were called upon to be brief in their telephone conversations and to dispense with polite expressions like "Please," "Be so kind," and even "Hello!" "The briefer your conversation on the telephone," said the appeal, "the more use of it the army can make, and the greater will be its efficiency."

People were also requested to be economical with food; to eat all they wished but to avoid waste. The government had reserves for a whole year, but wanted the citizens to take special precautions against any kind of future shortages.

For the first time, I observed, foreigners had begun to show their nationality by displaying in the lapels of their coats their national flags. Some of them were, no doubt, spies; others felt that they might as well let the Czechs know that they were friends and not enemies. One little man, fat and flushed and with a dour expression, and puffing at a huge cigar, displayed on his coat a conspicuous American flag. Once I tried to engage him in conversation, but he wouldn't say any more than that he liked Detroit better "dan any goddam city in de world"!

At last a group of us had begun to think that air raiders might not be especially considerate of foreign journalists, and that we had better not trust to luck too much. We, too, ordered gas masks. We also rented apartments in a village outside Prague. We would have two homes: one in the village for sleeping and one in the city

for loafing and working. It was not insignificant, I thought, that in all these arrangements British and American journalists co-operated. Never in any other part of the world had I observed such close co-operation and comradeship between the journalists of the two countries.

But, whatever their nationality, more and more English-speaking journalists were becoming concerned over the presence in Prague of Diana Sheean, the young English wife of Vincent Sheean, the American writer. Friendly, attractive, the mother of a little girl, she didn't fit into the picture of threats and ultimatums and mobilized armies and air forces on both sides of the border. We told her, again and again, that she ought to leave while it was still possible to do so without trouble. She smiled at our solicitude and, finally tiring of it, she told us in politely phrased words to mind our own business, which we did!

### *Saint Wenceslas Day.*

We hadn't realized that it was a holiday, in commemoration of the good Saint Wenceslas who had done so much to build up the old Bohemian state and to promote a far-reaching policy of humanitarianism. Like his grandmother, Saint Ludmilla, Wenceslas was a religious man. He hastened the spread of Christianity among his people. He built many churches. He laid the foundation in the beginning of the tenth century of Usvateho Vita, the largest and most famous church in Prague. The nobles did not like him, but the people did. He was kind and humble and well-meaning. He would go out into the field at night and pick grapes and cut wheat because he wanted to identify himself with the toil and the cares of the common man. He ruled only a short time, from 928 to 936; was then murdered by his brother. But the Bohemian people, that is the Czechs, had always honoured him. An English Christmas carol commemorates him too. Usually on Saint Wenceslas Day shops, offices, factories are closed and every family has a goose, just as in America on Thanksgiving Day every family is supposed to have a turkey. But to-day as I walked along the streets of the city I hardly knew it was a holiday. Everything was open, and people didn't particularly bother about geese. Every one felt that the important task at the moment was to keep the wheels of life turning. Only at the statue of Saint Wenceslas was there a spirit of solemnity.

Floral wreaths gleamed on the pedestal, and a crowd of people, mostly women and children, stood around in silent contemplation. Attached to the floral wreaths were cards or pieces of paper with a prayer. One little girl had written :

“ Please, Saint Wenceslas, don’t let anybody destroy our beautiful country.”

The little girl was smiling, but her mother was in tears. Many of the women at the monument were wiping their eyes with their handkerchiefs.

Late in the afternoon I went to the radio station for my daily broadcast to America. In the hallway I met Miss L—, a tall, red-cheeked girl with expressive blue eyes and with a spirit of dignity shining out of the very folds of her dress. Of German origin and the descendant of an ancient noble family, she had broken with her immediate relatives because of her political beliefs and was now giving herself to the preservation of Czechoslovakian independence. Excitedly she asked, “ Have you heard the news?” The glistening moisture in her eyes, even more than her excited voice, betrayed great inner pain.

“ I’ve been going around,” I said, “ and haven’t been in touch with news sources.”

“ Chamberlain was delivering a speech in the House of Commons explaining his difficulties with Hitler, and perhaps getting ready to declare war—yes, that’s what we understand—when he received a telegram from Hitler inviting him and Daladier and Mussolini to come to Munich for a conference.”

“ Why be upset about it?” I said. “ Hitler sees he cannot have his way by force, and so he wants to resume negotiations.”

“ I’m afraid it’ll be the end of Czechoslovakia.”

“ But Godesberg is out of the question. Chamberlain broke off negotiations on account of Hitler’s memorandum, and as much as said to the Czechs, ‘ Get ready to fight.’ No, I’m not as pessimistic as you are.”

“ It isn’t a question of Godesberg : it is a question of the historic lands and the fortifications; and at Berchtesgaden Chamberlain

had agreed to let Hitler have them. Once Hitler gets them he'll have his Godesberg and more. Our country will be finished."

This, of course, is what every Czech had been saying; and now it seemed as though their worst premonitions were in process of fulfilment. I remembered the "General" and wondered what he would say now.

"Still," I said, "Hitler's Godesberg memorandum has roused the whole world to a lot of fresh dangers, and the Prime Minister won't be insensitive to world opinion."

She shrugged her shoulders and left.

When I reached the hotel I found it astir with discussion and speculation. More and more newspapermen, especially the British, held to the belief that a settlement would be made in Munich at the expense of Czechoslovakia, even if their independence and their democracy had to be sacrificed.

Later, when I saw the "General," I said to him, "I suppose you are convinced now that it is the end of this country?"

"I haven't changed my mind at all," he answered casually, and stepped lightly into the elevator.

I telephoned to Annichka and asked her if she had become sufficiently de-Czechized to accept an invitation to supper.

"I was just getting ready to go to a movie," she said.

"Is it a good movie?"

"Yes, I've already seen it five times."

"What is it?"

"An American movie—*Snow White*. The whole city of Prague has gone wild over it, and it's lucky we have it here now—very lucky."

"But I'd like you to come and have supper with me, so we can talk."

"All right; I'll come."

With her little blue flashlight to guide us, we went to a restaurant in a remote side street. All the lights inside were turned out, or rather supplanted by a blue illumination only slightly brighter than the ones we had in our rooms in the hotel. Out of sheer habit the waiter brought us an armful of newspapers.

"But we can't read them," Annichka laughed, "by this light."

"I thought you might want to look at them," the waiter said and took them back.

There were few customers in the restaurant, and in the blue dimness we couldn't make out their faces. We couldn't even read the menu, and so the waiter told us what they were serving that evening. We ordered food and started talking.

"You know," said Annichka, "*Snow White* has been a godsend to us. Everybody is seeing it over and over again—it makes us forget everything; and if air raids come, the people in the movies are safe, because most of our movies are deep underground."

She began to talk of America. *Snow White* had given her and a lot of Czechs a fresh appreciation of the country. It must be such a gay and free and really beautiful land and with much artistic talent; she would be happy if she could go there some day for a few months. She had distant relatives somewhere in Nebraska. Had I ever been there? Perhaps some day we might meet in America. We chattered on, freely and cheerfully, until the waiter brought us our food. We started eating. Then Annichka pushed away her plate and said, "I'm sorry, I can't eat."

"What's happened?"

She didn't answer.

"It's the lights, I suppose," I said, "seeing so much blue and sitting in it all the time."

"Maybe." She drew a handkerchief from her pocket.

"You aren't crying?"

She shook her head and quickly put away the handkerchief.

I wondered if she had heard the news of Hitler's telegram to Chamberlain and felt as depressed over the prospects of the Munich settlement as did Miss L——. But she hadn't heard of it and wasn't much worried over Munich; Sirovy was in power, the army was mobilized, they were all determined on the preservation of their Republic and their democracy, no matter what happened, Chamberlain or no Chamberlain, Hitler or no Hitler.

"I'm afraid you Czechs are more Slav than I had imagined, and you like sorrow for its own sake," I said.

"Perhaps."

"But you're the most advanced and the most progressive of all

the Slavs in the world. What a beautiful and prosperous country Russia would have been, or Poland, if the Russians and the Poles had had your practical sense and your competence!"

"I'm just silly," she said. "Please forgive me. I didn't mean to act like this. Let's have some more wine."

We ordered more wine and proceeded with the meal.

"I think the strain has been a little too much even for Czech nerves," I said.

"You're quite right," she answered. "Our nerves are shattered; just think what we have gone through: the mobilization in May; constant attacks on us on the radio and in the German press; then Runciman; then Berchtesgaden; then Godesberg; then another mobilization, and now Munich—from day to day something new—a new threat, a new terror, a new disappointment. It's just too much."

"Oh, well, maybe it'll end well," I said, to cheer her up.

"I shouldn't really have accepted your invitation. I should have gone to see *Snow White*. I wish there were music here and people were singing and dancing!"

She broke into a laugh that was more of a cry than a laugh.

## Chapter XXVI

SEPTEMBER 29 (THURSDAY)

EARLY in the morning I was roused by the telephone. Annichka was calling: she wanted to apologize, she said, for her sudden plunge into gloom during supper the previous evening.

"How are you feeling now?" I asked.

"Terrible!"

"Why?"

"I guess we are finished."

"Why do you talk like that?"

"That's the way all my friends talk. We just don't know what to do with ourselves."

"Will you come and have lunch with me?"

"No; I've disgraced myself once in your presence—I won't do it again.

"I hope to see you soon."

"I hope so; but only if I feel better."

"And if you don't?"

"I don't believe in weeping before strangers."

Twenty-two years old, a college graduate, with the flush of health in her broad cheeks and, when I first saw her, with the gleam of joy in her large, long-lashed blue eyes, she sounded now prostrate with anguish. Nor was she alone on that bright Thursday morning. The intelligentsia everywhere was steeped in gloom and in anger; but—only the intelligentsia. Workers didn't share their emotions. The doorman at the hotel adjacent to the one in which I was living said calmly, "*Bude válka* (There'll be war)."

"Why do you say it?"

"We won't give a thing to Hitler."

"But at Berchtesgaden Chamberlain had promised him the Sudetens?"

"Don't forget Sirovy is our Prime Minister now, and the army is mobilized."

The workers showed no gloom, anger, panic. But many of the intelligentsia—especially newspapermen and officials—would talk of nothing else except the “stab in the heart” which Munich would prepare for them.

Many foreign journalists wondered if these Czechs’ outcries would prove to be justified. Two dictators were facing across a table the two premiers of the two largest democracies in Europe. The dictators would, no doubt, outshout the premiers; but would they also outsmart and outfrighten them as they had done on previous occasions? We wondered, and I thought of Professor N—. I would go and see him. He was one of the most brilliant men I had met in Czechoslovakia, and I wished to know whether he shared the prevailing gloom of the intelligentsia in Prague.

Because I couldn’t take with me the newly arrived English newspapers—they were needed by other newspapermen—I had typed out for his benefit two significant statements, one from the British Prime Minister’s speech in the House of Commons the day before and the other from an editorial of the New York *Herald Tribune* and reprinted that morning on the front page of the Paris edition of the paper. The passage from Mr. Chamberlain’s speech was as follows :

“ Armed conflicts between nations is a nightmare to me, but if I were convinced that any nation had made up its mind to dominate the world by fear or by force I should feel it should be resisted.”

The passage from the *Herald Tribune* editorial of September 29 read :

“ There is not a bit of doubt that the feeling of the 130,000,000 Americans from coast to coast, as a result of recent developments, is now against Germany in the position taken in her last memorandum. It would be foolish for any nation, even when as large and powerful as Germany, not to realize that within a very short time, if not immediately, the sentiment of this vast body of citizens of a country as splendidly equipped as America for giving both moral and material aid would count heavily. Every nation sympathizing with Germany and entertaining to-day the possibility of joining her should realize this.”

And again :

"A man who leads a nation as Mr. Hitler does and who would deliberately throw away the chance of negotiation with a pledge such as this behind it, would lose his sense if he didn't realize immediately that a nation like the United States, with all its resources, would instantly throw its moral weight, and very likely its material assistance, against him."

And once more :

"It will be a lesson to the German leaders of to-day, including Mr. Hitler and Marshal Goering, that to possess an enormous army and the latest kind of war machines counts little when the moral indignation of the world, and particularly a nation as powerful in population and resources as the United States, becomes aroused as it has been aroused in the last few days."

Slowly, with his lips moving, the professor read my typewritten sheet of paper. Neither his deep-set eyes nor his lofty brow registered any change of emotion. He might have been perusing a report on the latest catch of fish in the Elbe River for all the feeling he manifested outwardly. For some time he held the paper in his hands as if meditating over the significance of the words he had read. Then he sighed and laid down the paper on his desk.

"You don't feel encouraged?" I said.

He shook his head slowly and looked out of the window. Then, turning towards me, he said :

"We are being treated worse than criminals. That's the sad part of it: that's why I'm so pessimistic." He waited an instant as though to formulate his thoughts in inoffensive language—not only a habit but almost a principle with the Czechs, even with crises crashing all about them; and then went on : "Yes, worse than criminals, unfortunately. A criminal has a lawyer, witnesses; he can testify in his own behalf. Not only the judge but the public, the press, the whole world can hear the charges against him and his testimony in their refutation. It took mankind hundreds and hundreds of years and oceans of blood to fight out this right for the robber, the

gangster, the murderer. But look at the way our best friends, France and England, are treating us. They are not even trying us, for the Munich Conference is no trial: they are only passing a sentence, and it isn't at all certain it won't be a death sentence, in fact if not in intent. I know of no parallel in history, not one, to the procedure in Munich; and all my life I have been studying history. Think of it! Our nation, so healthy economically, far healthier than any other nation on the Continent, with a decent standard of living for everybody, and with schools for everybody living among us in whichever language they're brought up, and with no threat to the security of any of our neighbours—such a nation, and being tried, not even tried but sentenced, without a chance to say a word in defence or to make her case heard by the tribunal, the public, the world. And who are the judges? Two who supposedly were our friends and one who is on record as saying we ought to be destroyed, and the fourth pledged to support the man who makes this pronouncement. So what can we expect?"

"But the man in the street says Sirovy won't yield."

"We hope not, but Poland and Hungary are also threatening to march, and if they do and we are alone—"

He didn't finish the sentence; he didn't need to. If Germany, Poland and Hungary all marched on Czechoslovakia simultaneously and she was without any allies, it would be a hopeless fight.

"Strange that Poles, a Slavic nation, should in this moment of threatened catastrophe to another Slavic nation, co-operate with the enemy," I said.

"That's the tragedy of the Slavs; they're not like the Germans. See how the Germans hang together; but Slavs, even in this moment of one of the greatest threats to their race, don't co-operate. And Poland actually ready with an army to help our enemy! And —what those petty intellectuals who rule Poland now don't realize —also *their* enemy, the greatest they have ever known. They forget that they have a German minority and that Hitler is on record as saying he must move into the Ukraine. Such fools! But what can we do—we Czechs? God Himself seems to be against us and all that we represent." And after a brief pause he repeated, almost as if he were speaking to himself: "Not a criminal's chance."

In spite of his outward calm Professor N—— was one of the most tragic figures I had known in Czechoslovakia.

Late that evening, as I was walking along the Watslavsky Namesti, I heard loud talk at a near-by street corner. I went over to see what had happened. It appeared that while waiting for a trolley a Czech and a German had started an argument, and the German, in a burst of temper, had begun to denounce the Czech people. Instantly he was surrounded by Czechs. They said to him, "You shouldn't use such language about us." One Czech called him a "swine" and was rebuked for it by the other Czechs. In spite of shattered nerves and pent-up anxiety, the bystanders indulged in no derogatory language about Henlein, Hitler, Goebbels, the Nazis or the German people. Perhaps they happened to belong to the higher intelligentsia, or perhaps they were only ordinary and highly disciplined Czechs.

A policeman came over, and after he heard the story of what had happened, he took the German by the arm and said, "You'd better come with me, so we can find out who you are."

The crowd dispersed in silence. I couldn't help thinking what would have happened to a Czech in Berlin if, in the course of an argument with a German, he had flung out insulting epithets at the German people! And yet—in his speech at the Sport Palace—Hitler had said: "Whole regions [in Sudetenland] are being depopulated, villages are being burned down, and an attempt is made to smoke out the Germans there with shells and gas." I was reminded what a German had once said to me about the Sport Palace, where Nazis deliver their speeches in Berlin: "Don't forget the temperature of that big assembly hall."

## Chapter XXVII

SEPTEMBER 30 (FRIDAY)

As on the previous morning, the telephone woke me, though much earlier this time. Professor N—— was calling.

"Did I wake you?" he said.

"Yes; but it's all right."

"Sorry, but I thought I'd call you and ask you to come over."

"Any important news?"

"Come over and I'll tell you."

I dressed quickly and hurried to his home. He was in his study, as on the day before, clean-shaven, hair combed, well dressed, and his rather immaculate appearance was reassuring.

"Read this," he said, handing me a typewritten manuscript. It was a copy of a German broadcast of the Munich agreement which the four men, who had met in Munich to decide the fate of Czechoslovakia, had signed. The more I read, the darker everything seemed. Here I had been assuring, not only myself, but all my Czech friends, including my present host, that after Godesberg Czechoslovakia had won back her lost allies, France and England; I had maintained that Hitler had summoned the conference in Munich, not to have his will fulfilled, but to yield to the pressure of the mobilized Czech Army, the mobilized French Army, the mobilized British fleet and outraged public opinion all over the world, except in the few Fascist countries. And here was an account of Hitler's victory. . . .

On finishing the first page I looked up and wanted to say, "This is incredible!" The professor stopped me: "Read on, to the very end and then we'll talk."

I finished reading the manuscript and couldn't say a word. So the "General" had been right all along!

"What did I tell you yesterday?" said the professor.

I made no answer.

"Consider only one of the conditions: seven days at most in

which to evacuate the first four zones—seven days for Czechs, Jews, anti-Nazi Germans, farmers, businessmen, workers, school teachers and others who might find it dangerous to remain in German territory, in which to dispose of their homes, their savings, their business, everything, and just run. And those living in the First Zone have not even one day—only until midnight to-night! Can you imagine how those people are feeling now? Even in a war a conquered territory is not occupied as quickly as our allies, the French and the British, have agreed to let Hitler occupy the first four zones. . . .”

He stopped and sighed, perhaps for fear that emotion would overwhelm him and he would launch into violent language. Then he resumed: “Think of it! A half-defeated dictator with one foot in the abyss, lifted by the democracies, our friends, to a position of supremacy in Europe, and over our dead body. . . .” Again he was silent, and this time his eyes gathered brightness, not of light but of fire. “There’s your capitalist respect for private property. The Bolsheviks couldn’t have done worse. All our state property, billions and billions of crowns, squeezed out of our blood, out of the blood not of a rich but of a hard-working people, confiscated, with the help of the French and the British, and given to Hitler as a gift. Madness, isn’t it? . . .”

Again he lapsed into silence and started walking nervously up and down his study. . . . Then he stopped abruptly and pointed with his finger, trembling now with strain as well as anger, to the map on the wall. “Our country crippled,” he resumed. “Just look at it—crippled: raw materials gone, communications severed—Ah! What’s the use of talking? We’re lost!” . . . Again he paused and again started walking up and down the room.

“Perhaps, though, there’s going to be a fight after all?” I said.

“I wish I could believe it! . . . But—everything is against us. . . . Poland and Hungary are brandishing the sword over our heads, and Russia is too far away; and besides, don’t forget our Agrarians—they despise Russia.”

The outlook did seem hopeless, especially as Poland, a Slav nation, had for the moment allied herself with Germany.

“Two weeks ago,” started the professor again, “I had a birthday. I was fifty years old—and now I am seventy. I have aged

twenty years in two weeks." After another pause he added brokenly: "Seventy years isn't such a bad age at which to die—only it hurts terribly, not so much the prospect of your own death as the wanton murder of your lifelong dream. . . ."

He felt scorched and degraded, and now, in spite of his superb Czech discipline, he could no longer hide his inner feelings. They shone out of his moist eyes, his drooping lip, his sagging face.

"Mr. Chamberlain," he pursued again, with bitterness in his voice if not in his language, "and M. Daladier have reversed the law of the ages. Always under all forms of government the existing generation made sacrifices for the future generations—even barbarian rulers did that. Now it's all changed. To save the skins of their generation—the old generation, the one that is soon to pass out of life physically—they are sacrificing their future generations. Don't imagine this thing is finished. It's just beginning. . . . The blood will come later—perhaps sooner than Chamberlain and Daladier anticipate."

He was in a hurry to go to a meeting to discuss the Munich agreement with friends, and so we left together. We shook hands in the street and parted.

I hastened to the hotel. In the lobby I saw the "General."

"General," I said contritely, "I owe you an apology—"'

But he wouldn't let me go on. He was bursting with emotion; his blue eyes snapped with rage. "I was so furious last night when I heard of the Munich agreement I couldn't sleep."

"Not a wink," added his exquisitely mannered wife. "He tossed around all night and talked."

"I know these people in high places as well as a keeper in a zoo knows his animals. I foretold in March what was going to happen."

His wife nodded in assent.

"And everybody said I was crazy—because, they said, the Czech Army and the Czech air force were too important to the British and the French empires. See how important it is! Justice!"—and his face twisted in a grimace not of contempt but of horror. "They don't know the meaning of the word, these people in high places. What do they care about the poor Czechs? This is

another demonstration of the stupidity and futility of the press. We flooded the British and American papers with stories of sympathy for the Czechs; and what good did it do? It was all as futile as the attacks of the press in America on Franklin Roosevelt during the last presidential campaign. . . . Well—see you later. An outrage! A monstrous outrage!" he muttered under his breath, as he and his wife walked out of the room.

I went upstairs and wrote the following story for the American broadcast:

"There is gloom in this country, great gloom, greater than you in America can imagine, but not as great as it is going to be when the people here learn of the fate that awaits them and their country—a fate that was decided upon at an early hour this morning by Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany: a fate that was signed and sealed but has not yet been delivered to these iron-nerved Czechoslovaks. The papers here have only printed the fact that an agreement has been reached in Munich. The most alarming headline thus far has appeared in the well-known journal *Chesske-Slovo*, and all it says is: 'Four in Munich have come to an understanding. World peace preserved—but what is going to become of Czechoslovakia?' Obviously the government is doing precisely what it did at the time the former Cabinet had accepted the Anglo-French proposals—breaking the news to the people slowly, cautiously, so as to spare them a sudden shock. This may, or may not, be advisable. Presumably the Czech government knows its own people better than foreigners here. Yet this morning as we foreign journalists walked along the streets and watched the small groups that had gathered at corners discussing the latest news, we wondered what they would say, and how they would act, when they knew what had actually happened. Thus far they have preserved an amazing discipline and orderliness. It is almost incredible how thoroughly disciplined these Czechs are. But sooner or later, and perhaps sometime to-day, the truth will be told them, and it will be a painful truth—the most painful they have yet had to listen to. For according to the agreement reached in Munich, Hitler gets practically everything he demanded in Godesberg. Yesterday the Prague government, in response to a com-

munication from Great Britain, sent word that it would stand by the acceptance of the Anglo-French proposals which the former Cabinet had accepted, but with reservations. Presumably the reservations were that a two-thirds majority of Parliament would have to ratify the acceptance in order to make it constitutional and that their new frontiers would be guaranteed. If there were any other reservations they were not made public. But the original Anglo-French proposals were also based on the assumption of a gradual cession of Sudeten territories to Germany. According to the Munich agreement the occupation by German troops begins on October 1, that is, after midnight to-day, and by the 7th of October four districts are to be occupied by German troops. Then the International Commission is to determine which further districts in the so-called Fifth Zone are to be occupied, and in which there is to be a plebiscite; and this, too, is to be done in a hurry, so that by October 10 all the districts that are to go to Germany shall be under the occupation of German troops.

"All the economic wealth in the occupied districts is to be left untouched by Czech citizens and the Czech government. This means that fortifications, industries, railroad, railroad stock, livestock, food, everything which Hitler had demanded in Godesberg, become the property of the Reich. The final frontiers are to be decided by the International Commission, and within six months the people who want to change residence from one country to the other shall have the right to do so. The Hungarian and Polish minority question shall be settled before Germany and Italy join in the guarantee, not of the integrity of Czechoslovakia, but against unprovoked aggression. Czechs here who know the terms of the agreement are sardonic enough to say that within recent years several wars have been fought by big nations against little ones on the ground of unprovoked aggression on the part of the little nations, when geography and distance alone made such aggression physically impossible. There is a further provision in the Munich agreement to the effect that Sudeten Germans shall be demobilized from service in the Czech Army and in the Czech police, but with their consent.

"This, briefly, is the way in which Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany have agreed to dispose of the Czecho-German

problem. To those who have read the agreement in full—please remember, it has not yet appeared in the Czech press—it does not begin to tally with the proposals the former Cabinet had accepted, and which the present Cabinet only yesterday in a note to Great Britain, which was received by Mr. Chamberlain in Munich before the conference opened, said it would accept. First, the basis of the original agreement was the time element—the transfer of territory was to be carried out gradually. No stipulated time was stated, but considering the magnitude of the task, involving as it does millions of people and enormous properties, and the difficult and complicated administrative functions, ten days is no time at all. True, Hitler had demanded that everything be done at once by the 1st of October or he would march. Now he is to do his marching in ten days instead of in one, which is a complete enough victory for him, but which to the Czechs is a perversion of the meaning of the word gradually. Secondly, in the original agreement nothing was said about the guarantee against unprovoked aggression being conditioned on a solution of the problem of the Hungarian and Polish minorities. Throughout the past eight days practically the whole of the British Conservative press cried out against Hitler's demand that the Hungarian and Polish minority problem should be a part of the general settlement of Czechoslovakia. Now the four Powers have agreed practically to this provision. Thirdly, nothing is yet known as to whether or not the extent of the territories that are to be immediately ceded to Germany, and those in which a plebiscite is to be held, coincide with Hitler's Godesberg demands. There are, as you know, enough discrepancies between the original Anglo-French proposals and the present four-Power agreement for the Czechs to repeat to England and France what a Czech editor said this morning to a group of foreign correspondents : 'This isn't what we have agreed to give : this is what the enemy has been demanding.' Will the Czech government say this to England and France? I don't know. Nor do I know what the reaction of the people is going to be to this sudden shift of events. All I know is that people are gloomy, even though only few of them as yet know what has actually happened in Munich. These few can hardly speak : that's how depressed they are. One man said to me this morning, 'Two weeks ago I had a birthday—I was fifty years old. To-day I am

seventy—I have aged twenty years in two weeks,' and after a pause he added, 'Well, after all, seventy is not such a bad age to die.' Another man said, 'This is much worse than we anticipated.' He grew red in the face and waited an instant and said, 'We Czechs have always loved freedom too much to be completely annihilated.' These are hectic and fierce days in this part of the world, indeed all over Europe. Of one thing those of us who are watching and studying developments are convinced: Europe and all that it implies is only at the beginning of something too wild and too momentous for any of us to comprehend."

With the script in my pocket I went to the broadcasting studio. There was a new censor on duty, a young man, short and calm and with penetrating dark eyes, and with no knowledge of English. He asked Miss L—, the German girl, to translate it for him into Czech. She read the script before starting the translation, and as she finished she grasped the last page in her hands as though it were something too wicked to be endured and started sobbing.

"I expected terrible things, but not as terrible as this—such a quick end!" And she continued to sob. Then she translated the script into Czech; and when she gave it back to me she said: "This is the end. So that's the way Lord Runciman has solved the German minority problem—by making Germans like myself outcasts and pariahs. The Czechs are going to turn against us: we shall be men and women without a country, without rights, without a home, without anything but sorrow and exile. . . . Minorities!" And she clenched her fists and walked away.

At 4.25 in the afternoon the government announced to the people its acceptance of the Munich agreement. Hardly had the announcement been finished when demonstrations began. . . .

Late that night I broadcast the following story to America:

"For the first time in six nights Prague is lighted up—that is, there is light in the streets, lots of light, but only in the streets; not a bit of it in the hearts of the people. Great as was their feeling of humiliation and anger on the 21st of the month when the former government announced the acceptance of the Anglo-French pro-

posals, it was nothing compared to the outburst of emotion which I saw and heard this afternoon and evening. On the 21st the people still had hope. They shouted slogans. They had demands to make on the army, on leaders, on the world. They clamoured for a firm government, for a chance to go and fight for the independence of their highly civilized and beautiful country; democracy was an ideal worth fighting and dying for. But to-night they just shouted. There were few slogans. People were so overwhelmed with rage and despair they couldn't think. They marched around and waved hands and shouted wildly, incessantly. I followed the demonstration to a nearby barracks. On the 21st I also followed a demonstration to these barracks. The crowd had stopped, looked up at the windows and shouted for soldiers and officers to come out; and when they did the demonstrators went wild with hope and clapped hands and shouted themselves hoarse with acclaim. This evening nobody came out on the balconies, neither officers nor soldiers. Only a few uniformed men had stationed themselves at the gateway, presumably to prevent any effort to rush it. Disappointed, the crowd turned around and went back to the main street, shouting at the top of their voices—no words, no pleas, no denunciations, or very few: just shouts of fury and despair. I had the feeling that they were like a crowd of shipwrecked passengers tossed around by a fierce storm and shouting just to prove to themselves that they were still alive. That's how really terrible it all was—an unforgettable, crushing experience to those of us who witnessed it all. . . .

"All day long the people wondered what had actually happened in Munich. The morning newspapers merely printed that an agreement had been reached. The nature and conditions of the agreement were not mentioned in the press. The people sensed that something grave had taken place in Munich, and gathered in groups speculating as to what it might have been. Not until four twenty-five in the afternoon did they know what had actually happened. At five in the afternoon General Sirovy spoke, and his speech, though brief and terse, was packed with drama and heartbreak.

"'I have lived through the most difficult moment of my life,' he said, 'because I have had to fulfil the most painful duty that could ever have befallen me, a duty which is worse than death.'

And because I have fought in war and know the conditions under which a war may be won, I must tell you frankly, even as the conscience of a responsible army demands, that the force which in this hour would rise up against us compels us to recognize superiority and to act accordingly. My highest purpose is to save the life of the nation. This obligation we've taken over from our ancestors who shared a harder life than we, because they were unfree. . . . We were abandoned and were all alone. All European states and also our neighbours north and south are armed. . . . We are a fortress that is surrounded by forces which are stronger than ours. . . . We shall fulfil the conditions which have been imposed on us by force. . . . We call on our nation and our people to rise above their bitterness, pain and disillusionment. . . . Above everything there must be unanimity among us. . . .

"General Cráhy, commander-in-chief, also spoke. Both men called on the people not to lose heart and to start their national life all over again within new frontiers, but with the courage which Czechs had always shown when they were struck by catastrophe. Both men warned against disorders which would only serve the enemy, and pledged themselves to stand by the people in this hour of sorrow and help them to a new life and a new destiny.

"Hardly had the speeches finished when demonstrations started in the street. I watched them at first from the window of my hotel and then from the pavements. I do not know which was the more moving: the utter despair of these people or their sense of discipline even in this moment of anguish. At one place the police had formed a cordon and stopped the demonstration from pushing on. For an instant the police and the crowd stood watching each other; then the crowd gave a push, the cordon collapsed, and with a fresh burst of shouts the crowd pushed on. But the police shouted to them to turn back, and strange as it may seem to you, the crowd did turn back and proceeded along another street which had not been blocked to the demonstration. Later I witnessed an even more remarkable demonstration of this matchless Czech discipline. Watslavsky Namesti, the main street, was jammed with people. All traffic had stopped, and the crowd wanted to push on, but the police

again formed a cordon, and behind them on horses was a row of mounted police. The crowd sang the national hymn, waved the national flags and pleaded with the police to be permitted to march on. There must have been at least twenty-five thousand people facing the police. But the police said no, and the crowd continued to plead and to persuade; and then the police of their own accord opened the lines and, amidst terrific applause from all around, from the sidewalk, the shops, the windows, the demonstration swelled forward. I don't know of any people in the world who in the midst of great passion and woe could be capable of such amazing orderliness. So if you hear of riots in Prague, of street fights, of shootings, of the storming of government buildings, don't believe a word of it. It isn't true. There was no violence anywhere—not a trace of it—except in the voice of the people. As a matter of fact, the continued appeals to the demonstrators to disperse and to go home because they were only playing into the hands of the enemy, who would turn disorder into a fresh agony for them, had the desired effect. By ten in the evening the demonstrations ceased. There is absolute quiet in front of my hotel. The demonstrations have stopped, at least in the central part of the town. But the people are boiling with emotion, and they don't care who knows it. As I was returning from the demonstration to my hotel I hailed another American writer in English, and two well-dressed girls turned to me, and one of them shouted in Czech, 'Don't speak that foul language.' 'But I'm an American,' I said. 'English is a foul language,' said the girl and walked off. A little later a Czech woman called me up and said in a weeping voice: 'Who'd ever have thought it of the English? . . . And I visited their country only a few months ago! . . .' Then she told me that she had for a long time been subscribing to an English journal and she was writing a letter to the editor saying that she never again would want to read any English journal as long as she lived. Never before had I heard Czechs speak in such embittered language. Several people came to me and said: 'What d'you advise us to do? We have fought against Nazism—we're Germans—it's only a question of time when it'll be impossible for us to live here. We'll have no jobs, and who knows what'll happen here politically?' They asked if I thought they could come to America or Canada and settle somewhere on the land and just

work and forget the world. What could I tell them? Nothing, absolutely nothing.

"Czechs are fiercely embittered with the French and the English, more than on the 21st of September, because then they still had faith in their army and in their generals and hoped the French and English people would help them. Now the Munich agreement has stripped their army and their generals of much of the strength which they had.

"A week ago," said an eminent Czech journalist, "we could have got a better price from Hitler for our independence. Think of it—the French and the British wouldn't even let us do our bargaining with Hitler."

"The man's bitterness was beyond measure.

"Well, the city is quiet now and well lighted, but there is no other city in Europe in which there is so much inward darkness and inward turbulence as in Prague. 'It's all over but the wake,' said an American journalist. 'Europe as we knew it and loved it is finished,' said a well-known British journalist. At every turn one hears similar remarks from foreigners. Europe is drawing down the curtain on its past. Nobody can tell what will happen now. But a lot must happen sooner or later. Munich is both the end and the beginning of an era, and those of us who have been here and seen it all can only say, 'God help Europe.' "

## Chapter XXVIII

### "PEACE WITH HONOUR"

THE NEXT morning Prague had assumed the outward appearance of normality. Nowhere were there excited groups of people discussing the fresh catastrophes that had fallen on them and their country. Nobody carried a gas mask. The armed guards in front of public buildings had for the most part departed. In the parks brawny men with shovels were filling up the trenches which they had dug for refuge from air raids. In shops and homes women and young girls were scraping black paint and bands of paper off their windows. Early in the morning I saw a caravan of canvas-covered wagons, their tops gleaming with scarlet crosses, returning to the city, empty of wounded men.

The afternoon and evening before, when multitudes surged up and down the avenues, crying their hearts out with grief and wrath and ready for revolution, for blood, for death, leaders of the government, the army, the political parties, the social organizations, never ceased through the loud-speakers to chide, threaten, supplicate the people—yes, and weep with them—to go home and smother their hurt and trust in their future and not give the enemy an excuse to swoop down and clap them at once into the worst servitude they had ever known. Now the loud-speakers were as silent as tombstones, and as melancholy. There were no more appeals to be made, no more warnings to proclaim, no more tears to shed in private or in public. They were neither Germans who loved to curse nor Russians who loved to weep. They were Czechs with will enough and discipline enough to bring into submission their wildly beating hearts, their tempestuous souls—at least to a point of holding themselves back from deeds of violence. "The Czech doesn't despair," said the *Narodni Osvobozeni*, "he has two hands which know how to toil and he knows that the house which has been burned must be rebuilt and that he can do the rebuilding."

And yet deep inside themselves people knew neither peace nor serenity, neither forgetfulness nor forgiveness.

As I was going into the elevator of a hotel on a side street to see an American friend, the elevator man, who had been a sailor on a merchant boat and had travelled all over the world and spoke excellent English, scarcely answered my greeting.

"If you're angry," I said, "because I spoke English, I'll speak Czech to you." He made no answer. He only glared at me with contemptuous resentment. Then, as he stopped and let me out, he said in English!

"They think they got us licked? Well, we'll see—these democracies—sons of bitches, that's what they are. They haven't got any more democracy in them than a rattlesnake." He banged the door and went down with the elevator.

Then there was Mr. T—, one of the most liberal minds in the country—writer, philosopher, musician, jolly companion. During the days of the crisis he had always toted his gas mask as though it were a talisman of good luck.

"How come you're without a gas mask?" I said jokingly as I met him on a street corner. The very curve of his lower lip cried out in protest against my effort at frivolity.

"I'm keeping it all right," he said, "for the next war, and I shan't be fighting on the side of the democracies." He walked off without another word, without even bidding me the usual "*Na shledanou!* [See you again!]"

Even Madame V—, cultured and understanding, leader of the most progressive-minded women in the country and only a week before exulting in the humanitarianism of her people and so glad it had survived the onslaughts of the neighbouring dictatorships, called me up and said:

"What shall we do with these Germans? They are so incorrigible. They've fled from the Sudetens, and we've opened camps for them and given them food and shelter, and now what are they doing? Their children are parading about and shouting they want German schools."

"But it is only the children who are shouting it," I said.

"But don't you know what that means? As children they are shouting for schools, and when they grow up they'll shout for

Hitler, and there'll be no end to our troubles." Other Czechs, who only the day before believed in schools for Germans, and all other minorities had of a sudden begun to talk of suppressing all schools in foreign languages, indeed of driving foreigners out of the country.

"Speak Czech!" shouted a well-dressed middle-aged man as Sidney Morell of the London *Daily Express* and I passed a corner speaking English. We stopped and looked at the man. His face was red with anger, and he shouted again at the top of his voice, "Speak Czech!" Pedestrians stopped to look at him and at us, and nobody, neither man nor woman, said a word in reprimand or bothered to suggest to him that we might be foreigners and unable to speak his native language. A week before I shouldn't have thought it possible that any Czech, unless hopelessly drunk, which this man was not—which Czechs seldom are—would allow his bitterness with the outside world, especially the democratic world, to express itself in loud rudeness towards foreigners.

Like the floods of a newly burst dam the disillusionment with the word and the belief of yesterday was sweeping over the minds and hearts of all classes of people. I recalled General Sirovy's speech at the time he announced the acceptance of the Munich agreement which came to him and to his government in the form of an ultimatum.

"I have lived through the most difficult moment of my life," he had said, "because I have had to fulfill the most painful duty that could ever have fallen on me, a duty which is worse than death." I was now wondering whether, when he spoke these words, the general was thinking not merely of the humiliation that had fallen on him and his people and the blow to their economic well-being, but also of the breakdown in his own mind of the faith in which he had been reared and in which he, like Masaryk, like Benes and the other "professors" and generals, had reared their people and especially their army.

"Do you think," I said to a Czech journalist, "General Sirovy has also lost his faith in his old ideals?"

"I don't know, but how can any man hold on to them? Just look,"—and out of his pocket he pulled a clipping from a newspaper and asked me to read it. It was a description of the gaiety

and the celebrations in Paris after the announcement of the Munich agreement. "Think of it, they were actually having champagne parties in celebration of their Munich peace—and they didn't even have the decency to wait until our cries and groans had quieted down. . . . They thought they were drinking champagne, the fools! They didn't know they were drinking the blood of their future generations."

Then I met Jan, the Czech law student whom I came to know on the beach of a Czech summer resort shortly after my arrival in the country. Blue-eyed, gay, hopeful, ambitious to travel, to write books, to explore the world and to help build in Czechoslovakia a society of real well-being and culture for all its peoples, he was one of the most lovable youths I had known. In my travels in the country I had often thought of him. Like Marenka, the Moravian girl, he had become to me a symbol of the faith, the decency, the glory of the Czech youth as I had come to know it in my travels. Such a superb youth! The vast heritage of democracy and humanitarianism, from the days of King Wenceslas through Zhizhka and John Huss and Kamensky and Palatsky and Havlicek and Masaryk and the others, had become for it not only the ideal but the reality of life, all life, in all lands. And now?

I ran into Jan in a park near the railroad station. He was tanned and rugged and a little older than when I had first seen him, but with the same brightness and animation in his sky-blue eyes. We shook hands and sat down on a bench. I told him the places in Czechoslovakia which I had visited during my travels, and when I mentioned the Tatra he beamed with gladness. He too had been there, had camped out on the mountains with some of his friends. Wasn't the Tatra magnificent? The Swiss mountains which he had seen might have been more grandiose but not as noble—yes, noble! He loved mountains anyway. I invited him to go into a nearby restaurant for a beer or a cup of coffee, but he excused himself. He was to meet his mother and another woman soon, and together they would go to the Sudeten borderland and see what they could do for the Czech refugees who were fleeing from the Nazis.

"Think of it," he said, "we Czechs who had always kept our doors open to refugees from other lands are now ourselves

refugees—tens of thousands of us.” He grew solemn, but as yet I had observed in him no bitterness. It was of course more than tragic and ironic that a people who had for years been welcoming refugees from Russia, Hungary, Poland, Austria, Germany, were themselves now abandoning shops, farms, homes, and running with their families for shelter to territories safe from the “Munich peace.”

“Would you ever have thought the French would do it to us—the French whom we had adored and idolized? Well, they can have their Notre Dame, their Louvre, their Versailles. I wouldn’t even want to spit on these.”

“You are bitter, Jan, and of course——” But he interrupted me.

“Bitter? Hm! What have I got to be thankful for? What has any Czech youth to look forward to now? My father wanted me to be a democrat and a gentleman—of course—but he was mistaken. . . . It’s no use when democrats and gentlemen come to you and say, ‘Listen, your neighbour wants to burn your house. He is a devil of a man, and you don’t know how to deal with him. But we do, so let’s talk to him. We can make him, jointly with us, a protector of your house,’ and they not only *talk* you into letting them send their Runciman along, into letting them deal with the neighbour, they *force* you to do so, and then when you tremble for the safety of your house they conspire with the evil neighbour to burn it to ashes. . . . Bitter? Of course I am bitter.” His sky-blue eyes now flashed with pain and anger, and I stood and looked at him and wondered if the Czech youth all over the land had overnight become as disillusioned and cynical as he. Formerly the symbol of gaiety and hope and humanitarianism, Jan had of a sudden become the symbol of unmitigated bitterness and tragedy. Then he said :

“Yes, my father was wrong. I don’t want to be a democrat and a gentleman. I want to make of myself a Fascist and a barbarian.”

“Jan!” I exclaimed.

“Why not? Tell me. What else is there left for our Czech youth? If we don’t, we’ll be smothered.”

His mother came with another woman. He introduced me to them and they went off, while I started for home with a fresh appreciation of the real devastation of this “peace and honour” which Munich had given to the world—and Czechoslovakia.

More and more Germans, Czechs, Jews, were fleeing from the occupied territories, some with only the clothes on their backs, fleeing as before an attacking army. The more Germans and Jews that crossed into Czech territory, the deeper was the resentment and the hostility to them.

"Let the Jews go elsewhere, we have no room for them," was the cry.

"Let the Germans go back to the Sudetens," was the loud demand.

"But they are democrats—they'll be sent to concentration camps."

"What's that to us?"

"And they stood to the end, gun in hand, ready to die for your Republic."

"But the Republic is gone, and now we've got to save ourselves. And besides, we're through with Germans," was the outburst on every hand. "The only good German is a dead German. Even these Socialists and Communists and democrats are dangerous. They'll settle among us and become a new minority, and then Hitler or his followers will work on them as they did on the Sudetens and they'll become Nazis and they'll shout for autonomy, and Hitler'll have a fresh excuse to march in and occupy our whole country. To hell with them! Let them go to concentration camps. We don't want them. The Henleinists in the Sudetens were also Socialists and Communists, and now they are glad enough to beat up Communists and Socialists. That's the way the German is and always was. First and foremost he is a German. He loves to follow his pack and doesn't give a damn about others—so out with them, back to the Sudetens, let them get along as best they can. They're not our problem. And the same with the Jews. They too in the Sudetenland had until recently vaunted their Germanism. We were an inferior people. They wouldn't even learn our language. They were Germans. Well, let them continue to be Germans—we don't want them here."

A month earlier, a week earlier, no Czech that I knew would have spoken with such brutal callousness of other people, particularly of refugees. . . . Munich had changed them. Within a few hours it had killed their compassion, and the homeless, unwanted Germans and Jews flitted about from office to office, friend to friend,

in search of some word of hope and reassurance—and everywhere it was the word of hate they heard. . . . "My whole life I have given to democracy and trade unionism," moaned a German leader from Bodenbach, "and—I am like a man with the very earth falling under his feet. My mother I sent to one place, my wife to another, one of my boys to a third and the other to a fourth, and I have come here to Prague. We hardly had time to take anything with us, so we left everything behind—furniture, clothes, tools, savings, everything. We had no time to sell or to find a way of taking at least some of the things with us. We had to hurry—and now the Czechs tell us they don't want us. . . . Where can we go?"

He fixed his large blue eyes on me as though expecting an answer, but I had none to give. Where indeed could they go when nobody wanted refugees, or only a few of them—neither England nor America nor France nor any other land?

"I had held off many people from joining the Henleinists," he went on tragically. "They lost their jobs, they were threatened with beatings, some of them were beaten, but they didn't join. They believed in the Republic and in liberty. They are workers—and now they come to me and cry and say, 'What shall we do? You promised us protection if trouble came—and the Czechs are driving us back to the Sudeten lands and to concentration camps.' And what can I say to these people? I spent two hours to-day talking to a sixteen-year-old girl and keeping her from killing herself—yes, that's how bad it is. . . . We've been driven into a dark cellar and pressed against a wall, and now our throats are being squeezed." Nervously he kept patting the table with his hands, and his restless and tragic eyes wandered from the table to the ceiling and then to me, and his lips opened and closed as though he were silently talking to himself. . . .

After a pause he said:

"I never really appreciated how utterly cruel the world is. Here we are, Germans who don't want to be Nazis, and we are competent people—most of us are workers, skilled workers. We don't want charity, we want work. We want to go somewhere and forget this bloody European mess. You'd think that people like us would be welcomed in some part of the world—some wild part. You'd think that the British and the French, who were in such a hurry

to push Hitler upon us, would out of sheer shame—yes, shame—allow us to go somewhere, to one of their colonies, and give us a chance to live as best we can by the sweat of our brow. But it's the end! A lot of our people will commit suicide."

The only man who seemed to have regained his composure was the humourless, gray-haired elevator man in the hotel.

"Do you still feel crushed?" I asked.

"No, not any more."

"Congratulations!" I said.

"Well, I've thought it all over, and I've decided it cannot last."

"What d'you think is going to happen?"

"Everything. We'll get it all back, all our lost lands, and more. We'll get Dresden and Breslau and Berlin, too."

I started to laugh.

"I didn't think you had a sense of humour," I said.

"I'm not joking—I mean it—Dresden and Berlin. We'll get even someday." I laughed again and didn't stop when he turned on me his large, gray, resentful eyes.

I received a letter from Marenka, the girl in the Moravian village.

When I saw her in her home she gloried in her youth, in her dreams, in the prospect of studying law in Prague and of entering the diplomatic service. Above all she gloried in her books. She was only nineteen, and not even in Russia had I ever known a girl who had such a passion for books as she. Galworthy's *The Forsyte Saga* was her favourite novel, and in her private library she had in Czech translation the works of Tolstoy, Romain Rolland, André Maurois, Merezhkovski, Goethe, Schiller, Pushkin, Turgenev, Bertrand Russell, Sinclair Lewis, Upton Sinclair, Hugh Walpole, Margaret Mitchell and many others. She loved to sing and dance and to dress up in her multi-coloured Moravian costume, and on Sunday afternoons with her father or sister she would go to the cemetery and visit the grave of her mother, every Sunday afternoon if the weather permitted. Hope was hers, and ambition and a love of life and people, all people, including, of course, Germans and Jews.

"As you can well imagine," she wrote, "I was with all my  
W.L.A.

heart absorbed in the recent events. I have lived through a lot—for ten days I was drenched in tears. I ask only why is it that power and brutality always triumph over truth and justice? My heart breaks with grief when I think of my fatherland—such a beautiful, faithful, joyous land and so plainly and treacherously sold out!

"I am in the Tatra with my sister-in-law; a more beautiful country it is difficult for me to imagine. I love it as I loved my mother who is no longer alive, our lovely, noble Tatra. Unfortunately it is wrapped in clouds now and is dark and silent, as though it felt in its soul the pain that our people are suffering. Yet it is a lesson for me—one can depend only on one's own powers, and as for friendships, promises, any kind of alliances—these are all empty and wicked words; that's what I now believe. Such a disgrace that we are so disillusioned in ideas and sentiments we had so profoundly cherished. . . ."

I wondered as I read these lines whether she too, out of the bitterness of her soul, would say, or was already saying, as did Jan, "I want to make of myself a Fascist and a barbarian." But perhaps not; for, after all, she lived in a peasant village, and the sheer honesty and industry and simplicity of her neighbours, hundreds of them, would perhaps leave in her undimmed the faith, not in ideas, in democrats, in gentlemen, but in the common workfolk of the world.

Peace with honour!

One evening I was in a bookshop on the Watslavsky Namesti. There was an old man there leaning on a stick. Before him on the counter was a map of Czechoslovakia as it had become after the ruling of the International Commission that the so-called Fifth Zone would hold no plebiscite anywhere, but was within four days to be occupied by German troops. This ruling had stirred no street demonstrations. The people were too weary, too disgusted, too resigned. Yet it was an even more savage blow at Czechoslovakia and the souls of the people than was the Munich agreement. In that agreement the fate of the Fifth Zone was left to the decision of the above-mentioned International Commission, which included, of course, representatives of France and England. With

the consent of these representatives the Fifth Zone, including territories and districts that had never in all their history been German, had suddenly become a part of the Reich. And so this old man leaning on a cane and with his head bent low, like a ripe fruit that is ready to fall off its stem, said quietly, throbbingly, almost as if he were speaking to himself:

"Think of it—a month ago, two weeks ago, we were still a mighty people, a tiger who could lift his head before the world and roar out his beliefs and his wishes and earn for them the respect of everybody, even of his enemies. Now the tiger has had his claws clipped, his teeth knocked out, his breath choked, and he cannot even mew like a kitten any more. Why didn't we fight? Ah, Sirovy, you are no Zhizhka!"

A young lieutenant standing near by heard him and said:

"If they hadn't played such a wicked trick on us, and fooled us into giving up our fortifications and disorganizing ourselves for war before telling us of the decision or the Fifth Zone, we should never have accepted Munich. I give you my word we shouldn't. I know, I am in the army. We should have preferred annihilation to the slow doom that's ahead of us now. But they fooled us. We're a dumb people, the dumbest of the dumb. We trusted the French and the British. Their men on the International Commission approved of the Fifth Zone. What could we do? We couldn't possibly think of fighting, after the Germans had already come inside our fortifications. . . ."

The people in the Fifth Zone had no inkling of the fate that awaited them until they heard of it over the radio. Workers, farmers, shopkeepers, school teachers, students, men and women who had always been Czech, whose hearts were stirred with grief and indignation by what Munich had done to them and their country, heard suddenly that they too would within four days be annexed to Germany. They couldn't believe it. They rushed out of their houses and shops and asked their neighbours if it was true. They sent telegrams to Prague. They called up friends in nearby towns. In Polichka, for example, they first heard the news at five in the afternoon on the 7th of October. It struck them like a bomb—for they had only 90 Germans against 4934 Czechs. They didn't believe it. Even Hitler, they felt, and their Allies on the International Com-

mission couldn't possibly be so cruel to them when they were so innocent and so peaceful. They rushed about asking each other what it meant, and still few of them were willing to believe the report. Even the Germans in their midst shook their heads in doubt. And then came another broadcast at eight in the evening and confirmed the fateful news—and the people felt as though the earth were collapsing. Panicky and tormented, many of them started packing, and by midnight, with bundles on their backs, they were leaving their homes, their furniture and everything else and starting for the road—wanderers from their own land, their own homes, into an unknown and desolate future. Of course Czechs in Polichka were thinking of justice, of common sense, while Hitler and the German military commission that was deciding the fate of Czechoslovakia were thinking of the munitions factory in Polichka. The town was divided into two parts—one German, including the railway station, the ammunition works, all public buildings, all schools, and the other Czech, including about a hundred small houses, the motion-picture house and the cemetery!

In the press and to the people the very word Polichka had become a symbol of the dread destiny that had fallen upon them. Subsequently the Germans made an adjustment and withdrew from certain parts of the town, but the ammunition works and the public buildings they retained in their territory.

"Some day," said an embittered Czech journalist, "the powder from the Polichka factory will blow to pieces hundreds of British and French boys."

The press, including the ultra-reactionary journals, cried in bitter pain against the fresh calamity which, with the help of the British and French representatives, the International Commission had levelled on the country.

Here are some of the comments:

*Halo Noviny:*

"They take from us industrial centres, interrupt all important railway lines. Decision was submitted to Czechoslovakia as a *fait accompli* with an ultimatum of short notice."

*Poledni Narodna Politika:*

"Frontiers made by God and painted by human hands."

*Chesske Slovo:*

"Crushing decision of international commission . . . collapse of justice and common sense. . . ."

*Express:*

"It is much worse than the worst pessimist could imagine. . . . On Wednesday (October 5) without our presence the International Commission decided Germany should occupy districts in which there is a Czech majority or which are entirely Czech. There is no talk now of a plebiscite. . . . In a lost war nothing worse could have happened to us. . . . In the history of mankind there is no example of such a wicked game. What do the British and the French masters take us for?"

*Lidovy Noviny:*

"Old Czech towns where no Germans at all live are in sheer ignorance of the relationship of the races, being torn away from Czechoslovakia without the least basis of truth and reason. . . . The impossible dictation tears asunder the Republic, its communications, its economy, its political integrity—the whole network of everything between Bohemia and Moravia is torn to pieces. . . ."

And the *Pravo Lidu* remarked :

"It is the same as if a man had his arms and legs cut off and his lungs cut out and a physician had said that by such an operation the life of the patient had been saved."

Once more the *Lidovy Noviny*, the most brilliant intellectual journal in the country :

"If the world is to be ruled not by right but by force, our place shall be with him who commands the greater force and the greater resolution. . . . Let us become, like Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, Germany's greatest provider and consumer, and let us reject

combinations that would want to place us into an anti-German front. We wanted to fight for the salvation of mankind, but we have been taught that such a fight doesn't pay. . . . Well then, let us look after our own salvation and remain true to ourselves and only to ourselves. . . . New Europe? But no, not a new Europe, the old Europe, pre-war Europe, selfish, unsettled. . . . Let us keep, somewhere in the corner of our hearts, faith in the higher law of justice, for some day the hour of such justice will strike and that will also be our hour."

The legal justification for the ruling of the International Commission about the Fifth Zone was the old Austrian census of 1910, which at the insistence of the German representatives was used as a basis for determining which districts were German and which Czech. The influence of the World War on the population of these territories, the vast amount of talent, energy, money, billions of crowns, which during the twenty years of the Republic the Czechs had poured into them, were brushed aside as irrelevant rubbish. But at best, in Czech eyes the census of 1910 was, as Professor N— had said, "an undisguised fraud." It was based, not on the mother tongue or nationality of people, but on the so-called *Umgangssprache*, "language of intercourse." If a Czech maid worked in a German home and spoke German she was automatically set down as a German. The same was true of Czechs employed not only in the government but in private enterprises.

Mr. Wickham Steed tells us that in that year he was correspondent for the London *Times* in Vienna. He had filled out his census return by recording his nationality as British and his language as English. That was not satisfactory for the Austrian census takers, so they came to Mr. Steed's home and inquired "what my *Umgangssprache* or usual language of intercourse in Austria might be. I answered German. 'Also, *Deutsches* (Therefore, German)' they amended my return accordingly."

If the census takers didn't hesitate to disregard truth in the case of so eminent a British resident in Vienna as the correspondent of the London *Times*, one can imagine what happened in the case of Czechs who had neither a British flag nor a British navy to protect them, and who were subject to pressure by Austrian officials.

But even a scanty survey of the figures of 1910 reveals that, in spite of all subversion of reality, districts like Opava, Bilovets, Novy Jicin *were even then overwhelmingly Czech, having separately and jointly large Czech majorities!*

Town after town, as distinctively Czech as Berlin is German, was demanded and yielded to the German representatives on the International Commission because of strategic or economic considerations. Here was Poshtorna, for example, with 3503 Czechs and only 285 Germans, but with an important railway junction. I have already spoken of Polichka, with its 4934 Czechs and only 90 Germans and its ammunition works. Here was Shtramberk, with 3200 Czechs and 47 Germans, but with a large cement works; Korpshivnitse, with 3968 Czechs and only 697 Germans, but with the well-known Tatra motor works and the largest railway carriage factory in Central Europe; Ervenitse, purely Czech, but with the electric works supplying Prague with light; Brezova, with reservoirs, supplying water for the city of Brno, the capital of Moravia; Svinov, with 3035 Czechs and 411 Germans, but with a powerful broadcasting station. All these and many other towns were annexed by Germany. The city of Pilsen was left within Czech territory, but with only a few kilometres between it and the German armies, and completely at their mercy in time of peace or war.

Engreau, across from Bratislava on the Danube, never had been a port of the Sudetenland nor of old Austria. It had belonged to pre-war Hungary. I had visited it during the summer with a Slovak professor and admired its superb scenery, its athletic equipment, its air of freedom and comfort. Now it was part of Germany. Why? Hadn't Hitler said that he wished only “to liberate the tortured millions in the Sudeten lands?” But Engreau meant a foothold on Bratislava and on Slovakia, and so that too was sucked into the territories of the Reich with the consent of the British and French representatives on the International Commission.

These are only a few examples of the manner in which this commission, in utter disregard of the assurances of the British Prime Minister and the British press, had proceeded to slash to pieces railways, highways, industries, towns, villages, fields, forests in Czechoslovakia, with the intent of so mutilating and crippling the country

as to make it impossible for the Czechs to maintain even a semblance of independence.

"Why did they have to create this Czechoslovakia?" said one of the porters in the hotel. "Why create something and then cut off its head and its feet and rip its belly open—so that the inside falls out? It's so indecent, so wicked!"

Peace with honour!

With the ruling of the International Commission on the Fifth Zone, Czechoslovakia as a story for the world press came to a complete and abrupt finish.

"It's all over but the wake," Walter Kerr of the New York *Herald Tribune* had said on the 30th September, after the terms of the Munich agreement had become known. The words were even more true now. With 800,000 Czechs and all their possessions, homes, shops, factories, banks, fields, investments annexed to Germany, with main highway and railway lines cut and crippled, with half of the productive forces of the country gone to Germany, with 90 per cent of the fuel supplies taken over by Germany and Poland, with at least half of the glass and textiles factories also in Germany, with strategic military positions reduced to worthlessness, Czechoslovakia was now at the mercy of the goodwill of Berlin.

"The mouse may outwit but cannot outrun the cat," said one American journalist as he was leaving Prague, "but if you ever hear of a mouse that can outwit a cat, will you let me know? I'll write a bang-up story and maybe I can get a radio job for such a mouse." That was the way correspondents felt as they were scattering to all parts of the world, Spain, Palestine, England, Germany, France, Italy, South America, Africa, where fresh stories were starting to erupt or were already bursting with flame and lava. They were like mourners who had come to a funeral and were now going home, leaving the bereaved to their grief and their misery.

I remained in the country for nearly two months more, and hardly a day but brought fresh deprivations and fresh humiliations to the already stricken people. In the name of the "liberation" of their 80,000 kinsmen, the Poles with a burst of rage pounced upon Teschen and swept into their fold not only 76,238 Poles but 120,639 Czechs. As a manifestation of their respect for the rights of minori-

ties, in the name of which, in a moment of the prostration of their Slav kinsmen, they had drawn the sword over their heads and their hearts, they at once shut all Czech schools! Then tired of trusting the International Commission and "friends" who, under pretext of international justice, were hurriedly tearing to pieces not only their geographical integrity and economic self-sufficiency, but all probability of political independence, the Czechs with their practical-mindedness entrusted the solution of their conflict with Hungary to Germany and Italy. In consequence Hungary was allotted not only territories with predominantly Hungarian populations, but also the cities of Koshitse, Uzhorod, Mukachevo, which had only Hungarian minorities and which the Czechs, with their energy and capital, had within twenty years lifted to a position of hygienic cleanliness and growing affluence. The vast sums they had invested in civic improvements and in public buildings—sewers, parks, reservoirs, power stations, schools, homes, hospitals, barracks, offices, fortifications—went over to Hungary without compensation.

They swallowed the fresh hurt and humiliation and solaced themselves with the thought that now, purged of minority problems and obligations to foreign Powers, they could remain on their lands, the few they had left, and pursue their own Czech culture and their new destiny, their own Czech destiny, without further dictation and molestation from anybody. They would no longer be bothered by the German or any other minority. They had only 377,830 Germans left, and they were hoping that many, or a majority of them, would exercise their right of option, as provided in the Munich agreement, and move into Reich territory. They would now close the German university in Prague, the technical college in Brno, and all the other higher German institutions of learning which they had been maintaining for the German population. They wanted above all to be left alone and to be their inner and outer Czech selves. But they reckoned without the motive and the aim of their new master, Nazi Germany.

On the 18th of November Engineer K—— came to see me. He was in his early thirties, well groomed, athletic, quiet-voiced, and he spoke excellent English.

"Have you ever been to the Chodsko country?" he asked.

"Sorry, I never have, but I mean to go there, perhaps soon."

I had heard of Chodsko—the most legendary and romantic part of Bohemia, the only region where the people still wore their ancient costumes, sang their own ancient songs, and preserved in their everyday life much of their ancient Czech manners.

"Well," echoed the engineer, "you're too late."

I felt like laughing. How could I be "too late" to visit a place like Chodsko? Jokingly I said: "It hasn't been blown off the face of the earth?"

"Germany wants it, and our government has agreed to let her have it."

"Maybe," I said, "it's only a rumour, like so many of the stories that circulate about the town."

"No, it's official. The Nazis want Chodsko for strategic and railway reasons—that's what they claim. And of course our government can only bow and say, 'Please help yourself!'"

Chodsko. Symbol of Czech heroism, stirring in every Czech heart emotions of glory and love for his land, his history, his ancestors, and no more German than Berlin is Russian, or London Chinese, or New York Spanish, and now it was to become a part of the Reich because it fitted into a military or economic programme! I had first heard of the place in the Tatratska Lumnitsa from a Czech student whose hobby was Czech folklore.

"Years and years ago, in the twelfth century, the people of Chodsko were appointed by the king," he said, "to guard our frontiers. Their emblem was the head of a dog, to denote their faithfulness to the king and to their fatherland. They enjoyed special privileges. They were among the freest men in our country and in Europe. Then a new nobleman came to rule over them. His name was Lomikar, and he took away from them their privileges, and they rebelled against him. A stern ruler, he sentenced the rebels to death. The name of the leader of the rebellion was Jan Kozina. He was taken to Pilsen to be executed. As he mounted the gallows he turned to Lomikar and said: 'Lomikar, Lomikar, a year and a day from to-day, I shall meet you before the Lord's Court of Justice.' Lomikar laughed. Exactly a year and a day later Lomikar held a feast in his home. He and his guests drank and sang and ate and gloried in their triumph over the prophecy of his death, and then he beheld the apparition of Jan Kozina and fell over dead."

I remembered the story now. Throughout the centuries of servitude it had been a reminder to the Czechs of their ancestors' love of freedom and of their readiness to die for their liberties!

An opera and a play had been written round this legend. Again and again under the Republic, Czechs crowded the theatres in which these were given and refreshed their memories and their emotions with the noble deeds of their ancestors.

Chodsko! A noble and holy word in the Czech language, and now the place would be theirs no longer!

"You see," went on the engineer caustically, "they aren't taking it from us. They're swapping it, and other places which they want, for towns and villages which they had already occupied, with the balance in territory, population, resources in their favour. They're compelling us to become gipsies—only we're swapping, not horses, but our own people. That's the kind of independence Mr. Chamberlain has guaranteed us."

Outwardly the man was too calm even for a Czech, but there was no mistaking his inward hurt and wrath at the fresh humiliation that was being visited on his people.

"I don't think they do it for economic or strategic reasons only. They do it just because they want to humiliate us and make us feel that they are our masters and can do as they please. And so they can. They are the same people who had been screaming about the iniquities of Versailles. . . . Well, we Czechs aren't Germans. We don't scream about anything. We don't even swear much. I wish we did, really; I think it would help us to still the hurt in our souls if we could call people names as the Nazis are doing. It might help us in other ways, too. You can scare people, especially democracies, by yelling at them and calling them names. But we aren't built like Nazis. Maybe it's because we've been vassals so long under Austria. But we Czechs have excellent memories. We'll remember Chodsko—that'll be our battle cry, and—" He didn't finish the sentence. To the last he was a Czech who wouldn't even utter a threat in the presence of a foreign writer.

"We have only one consolation," he said before leaving. "We won't need to maintain a German university in Prague and a technical college in Brno. No higher institutions of learning for and

by Germans any more! We'll purge our Czech air of every bit of the German virus."

A few days later Engineer K—— came to see me again.

"I guess they mean to keep on tormenting us," he said. "They insist on keeping open the German university in Prague and the technical college in Brno."

"But there are less than half a million Germans in your country now?"

"They'll send students from the Sudetens, from the Reich, from Austria. Yes, it's true."

"Will the Prague government agree?" I asked.

"Agree? But how can it disagree?"

"But even the Agrarians," I said, "have been writing of a Czechoslovakia purged of German culture."

"But we don't count any more. . . . They can do anything they please with us—ours is not the right even to protest but only to obey. . . ."

He was a sad man, sadder than Professor N—— on the day he called me to his office to show me the German version of the Munich agreement. Pacing up and down the floor beside the window and smoking incessantly, he uttered now and then a phrase, a sentence, as though making articulate only a part of his inner turbulence and cogitation.

"Perhaps," I said, "men like you should leave the country."

"Oh, no," he snapped back, "not I! Other Czech intellectuals may run—to Paris, to London, to South America, to your country, but I remain here, unless——"

"D'you think there's a possibility of a Gestapo coming to Prague?"

He gave a shrug. "Everything is possible. They're not finished with us. Perhaps they're only just beginning. They'll do everything they can to throttle us and make us forget our ancestors, our heritages, especially our great humanitarians. But maybe they'll find out they cannot throttle us so easily. Others have tried it, and we have survived them—yes, we have survived them—and," with a sudden burst of courage he exclaimed, "we shall live again, yes, we shall!"

Shortly afterwards an announcement was made that fifteen thousand students chiefly from the Sudetens had matriculated in

the German university in Prague. The non-Aryan professors and instructors were dismissed and promised pensions. The technical college in Brno was likewise opened and again chiefly for students from the Sudeten lands. From a high official in the Czech government I learned that inspectors from the Reich were to visit these schools and enforce the observance of Nazi discipline and Nazi ideology. The deficit of these schools was to be met, not by the Reich, for the benefit of whose citizens they were to function, but by the Prague government—that is, by Czech and Slovak taxpayers!

Peace with honour!

Madame C— was so shattered by the avalanche of calamities that were daily falling on her people that she couldn't even weep any more, so she complained. She lay in bed, not sick but just agonized, when I came to bid her good-bye.

"I'm trying to make myself believe it's all a lie," she said. "Think of it, my friend, only a short time ago we were a free people—and now we must even remove the pictures of our beloved Masaryk from our schools and public offices . . . and our young people are turning into savages. Have you heard what happened to Masaryk's statue in the philosophical faculty of the university?"

"No, I haven't," I said.

"A group of students went in with ropes, pulled it down and smashed it. Our own students, Czechs—yes, that's who did it! Do you see how poisoned we are already?"

The nieces came in from the street, the older one calm and grave, the younger one visibly upset.

"Well, what did the Russian consul say?" asked Madame C—, turning to her younger niece.

"He doesn't think the Soviet Union will open the door to Czech immigrants," she answered with disgust.

"Never?"

"Not for the present." She stood up, went over to the window and looked gloomily into the lighted street below.

"You see," explained Madame C—, "Zdenka here has always been a Russophile. Turgenev is her favourite author, and she wants to emigrate to Russia and live there."

"And you?" I turned to the older girl. "Would you like to emigrate, too?"

"Yes, but not to Russia," she answered solemnly. "I don't like terror."

"But it's only against traitors they're using terror," interrupted the younger niece.

"I don't like it even if it's used against traitors," flung back the older girl.

"There's no other place for Czechs to go," answered the younger girl. "So many of us would like to run away. It's disgusting what's happening here—the Agrarians want to make a Fascist country out of what little is left of Czechoslovakia, and our students are pulling down the bust of Masaryk and smashing it. Savages—that's what we'll become—just like the Nazis."

"Yes, it is sad," remarked the aunt. "We are going to find it hard to stay here, and there's no place where we can go to, nobody wants us."

"Well, I'll get to Russia yet," said the younger girl.

"You two are young—maybe you can get somewhere. But I'm fifty-seven already," said the aunt.

"Wait until I get to Russia, Auntie," said the younger girl spiritedly. "I'll bring you over there. You like books, and you'd make a good librarian—and the Russians don't mind giving jobs to older people."

"Would many Czechs like to go to Russia?" I asked.

"Tens of thousands of them. The consulate is always crowded."

"Well, children, something is wrong in Russia when the leaders keep on arresting and shooting one another. I'm afraid it's not a place for an old woman like me," said the aunt. "You see, we're still here in our native land, but already we talk as though we have lost our birthright. That's how terrible it is."

I rose to go.

"Oh," said the older girl, "have you got your American passport with you?"

"Yes," I said.

"Let's see it."

"I took it out of my pocket and showed it to her. She crouched down beside her aunt, and the younger girl joined them, and the

three women, with intent and smiling faces, examined every page, every word, of the little red booklet which I had been only casually carrying around in my inside pocket.

"Such wonderful paper!" said the aunt.

"So many visas! Have you been in all these countries?" asked the younger girl.

"Not in all of them," I said.

"But you could go if you wanted to?"

"Yes, I'm sure I could. That's what the visas mean."

After a brief pause the older girl said:

"Only a short time ago we, too, with our passports could go everywhere, and now we're refugees, immigrants and outcasts, and nobody wants us any more."

"Isn't it marvellous," said the younger girl, "to feel you are actually free to go anywhere you want to! I wish I had a passport that would give me such freedom."

"I guess we all do," sighed the aunt.

When I left I wondered how many millions of Czechs there were to whom an American passport had of a sudden become a symbol of the freedom they had lost; who, only a few weeks earlier, had felt they had a homeland and a civilization of which they were proud, and for which they were ready to lay down their lives.

I went into a haberdashery shop to buy a handkerchief. The young man in glasses with the neatly trimmed moustache, who had often waited on me, greeted me with a smile and asked what he could do for me. I told him what I wanted, and with a swift turn he stepped up to a shelf, pulled down a box and gave me a handkerchief. Dexterous and competent, it was obvious that he loved his calling.

"How is business?" I asked.

"It's no use complaining," he said and smiled. Here, I thought, was one man who would not be driven into despair over his own or his country's future. I told him I was soon leaving for America, and, still smiling, he shook my hand and wished me a happy journey.

"If you come to Prague again," he said cheerily, "drop in to see us."

"I surely will," I said and started for the door.

A woman was standing there, short, hunchbacked, with big grey eyes which she fixed on me when I opened the door.

Hardly had I gone outside when I heard someone calling me. Turning, I saw the hunchbacked woman. She came over and said :

"D'you speak German?"

"Yes," I said.

"You don't mind talking for a few minutes to an old woman like me?" she asked apologetically.

"Not at all—please."

"You see, we're all worried—I mean we Jews—because there is so much anti-Semitic talk in the town. It's come up almost overnight, and I thought that perhaps you, being a foreign journalist, would know more than the rest of us and could tell me whether or not Hitler is planning to occupy the whole of Czechoslovakia."

"If he is, he hasn't said so, nor has the German press printed anything to that effect," I replied.

"So you don't think he'll come here?"

"It doesn't look as though he will."

"If he doesn't we'll get along somehow. The Czechs don't make pogroms. They aren't like Hlinka Slovaks and Nazi Germans. They'll talk a lot, and perhaps they'll pass a few laws, but they won't rob us or send us to concentration camps. But if Hitler comes, it'll be terrible, just terrible."

"I don't think he'll come," I said, by way of cheering her.

"But you aren't sure?"

"Nobody can be sure of anything nowadays."

"That's what makes it so bad for us Jews. The man who waited on you is my son. Such a nice man, isn't he?"

"Yes, very nice," I said.

"He is twenty-nine years old. Has a wife and two children, and they've been very happy. Last night I visited them, had supper with them, and my son said that if he knew what was going to happen in this country he'd never have got married. Then his wife said that they might have got married, because they were so much in love with one another, but they wouldn't have had any children. 'Jewish people shouldn't have children any more,' she said. Yes, that's what she said, and I felt so bad I scolded

her and cried, but she and my son kept saying again and again, 'Jewish people shouldn't have any children.' That's what they kept saying."

We walked along in silence, and when we reached the corner of the next street she turned into a side street, and as if propelled by an invisible power I followed her along. We were now on a narrow avenue with little traffic, with a burly policeman leisurely strolling along in the middle.

"I don't suppose Jews in America talk like that, do they?" she asked.

"I haven't heard them talk like that."

"Happy people!" She again became silent, but not for long. "I never would have thought that my son would talk like that—but he did, and so did his wife, and I was so upset. I lay awake most of the night thinking and fretting and crying. But now I know they are right."

"You mean," I asked, "Jewish people should die out?" She didn't answer, but walked on beside me in silence with measured steps, her eyes fixed on the pavement. Presently we came to another crossing, and she stopped.

"It was a mistake," she said as if speaking to herself.

"What was a mistake?" I asked.

"Our grandparents made a mistake. They should have stopped having children."

She nodded and fixed on me her big grey eyes, which even in the dark shone with a strange light.

Annichka called me on the telephone.

"You've been neglecting me," she said.

"It's not very cheerful these days," I said, "to meet Czech friends, especially intellectuals."

"They complain so much?"

"It isn't what they say but what they don't say that hurts—makes you feel as though life weren't worth living."

She laughed over the telephone and said:

"Suppose I tell you I am not that kind of a Czech—not any more, anyway?"

"Then let's have dinner together?"

"Yes."

She came over, and not even in summer when I had first known her, in the days of the triumphant march of the Sokols, had she appeared outwardly more cheerful. She wore a new coat with white trimmings which only enhanced the brightness and the cheer of her deep blue eyes and her extraordinarily mobile face.

"Shall we go to a Slovak cellar?" I said, "and have good Slovak food and Slovak wine and hear Slovak music?"

"Splendid!"

We ordered food and wine and, seeing her so blithe and composed, I said:

"That was a happy idea of yours to call me. Not a day but some Czech friend I meet breaks my heart, not so much with what he says as with what he chokes inside of himself."

"I felt like that, too, until a few days ago, and now I'm completely changed. I don't worry any more and therefore am no longer a disappointment to myself or a burden to my friends. In fact I cheer all my friends now, really."

"You're marvellous," I said, "just the person for me to talk to this evening. I want to carry away with me to America the image of one very cheerful person in Prague."

The waiter brought us our Slovak wine, and we drank it and proceeded to talk.

"You see," said Annichka, "the main trouble with us is that when we're depressed we seldom try to dig deep enough into our minds to understand our problem in terms of our immediate life."

"Have you been studying Freud recently?"

"No, I've read very little of Freud. I've never needed him."

"Last time we went out to supper you weren't so very happy."

"Oh yes, I remembered in that blue-dimmed room. I was horrible, wasn't I? I'm so sorry."

"You were more like a Russian than a Czech Slav—at war with destiny itself."

She laughed.

"Shall I tell you what's happened to me? You may as well know, and it might be of special interest to you as a writer." She lifted her glass and said:

"*Na Zdar!*"

I lifted mine and returned the greeting. She drank all of her wine, and I instantly refilled her glass.

"Well, you see, I'm a funny kind of a Czech; at least that's what I am to myself now. My mother was a Czech and a Lutheran, my father was a Jew, and of course in this country children take after the mother because she trains them more than the father does. So I never thought of myself as Jewish except casually. But Hitler's voice is very loud in this town now, and I too have been reminded that after all my father was Jewish. He is no longer alive—he died five years ago, and I loved him because he was so kind to mother and me. And do you know, from the moment I was reminded that I was Jewish and terrible things might happen to me as to all Jews, whether or not they are of mixed bloods, I became serene?"

"That's unusual," I said.

"It's so, for instantly I decided that if anything happened—I mean if they were trying to make me suffer for having a Jewish father—I'd take care of myself." She opened her handbag, took out a little tin box, unclasped the top and, looking into it, went on as calmly as though she were only displaying pieces of candy: "Count them—eight tablets. If you take one or two of them, you go to sleep and never wake up." Quickly she fastened the top of the box and threw it into her handbag.

"Now please don't think it's terrible to be prepared for death like I am."

"I thought I was going out with a cheerful Czech," I said.

"But I tell you I'm cheerful," and she took my hand and shook it and laughed cheerfully.

"Don't be silly," she said. "If you were in my place and didn't prepare for all emergencies as I'm doing, you'd be a dunce. What's the use of going to concentration camps and having some foul creature insult you and spit on you or beat you? There's no use living unless you get satisfaction out of life, is there? One has to be philosophical in times like these and set limits to wants and to fulfilment. I don't want to get married. I don't want to have children—not now any more. I don't want to saddle myself with any responsibility involving another human being. I want to be absolutely free, so that if I have to swallow these tablets or turn on

the gas in my flat, I won't leave anybody in this world to endure sorrow on my account, and also I want to live as best I can. I am in love with a man. We thought of getting married. But I've persuaded him that marriage would be foolish, and so we are just going to live together and get all the pleasure we can out of each other. I have a comfortable flat, good food, books, a radio. I have a job which I like, and I don't think I'll lose it, because the man I work for is an Agrarian and thinks the world of me. In summer I am going to go to Tatra again—as I did last summer. I'll go to the theatre and to parties, and if I meet foreigners and they invite me to a meal I'll accept their invitation—you've educated me out of some of my Czech independence." She laughed gaily again. "I shall live," she went on, "as freely and as joyfully as I can, and I won't hate anybody—I can't. But I won't let them take me to a concentration camp or a jail and step on me with their dirty boots. I'm prepared for life, which I love, and for death, too, if I can't enjoy life any more. So I'm really very happy, and I don't moan any more and don't ever say to myself, 'I wish I never were born,' or words like that. I know my problem and how to solve it, and I am free from trouble. And now come, let's drink our wine."

So we drank wine and ate Slovak food and listened to Slovak music and danced, and several times we joined in Jugoslav and other Slay dances. When I took Annichka home I thanked her for calling me and hoped that someday if I again came to Prague I would find her as cheerful as she had been that evening.

"Oh, don't worry, if I am here I shall be cheerful, and if I cannot be cheerful,"—she patted her bag lightly with her fingers —you'll understand what I've done and why. Good-night."

I took a cab and went home trembling.

Peace with honour!

*Part Three*

REBIRTH

## Chapter XXIX

### "WE SHALL LIVE AGAIN"

AT LAST it came—a decree for the removal of the busts and portraits of "political personages" from schools and other public institutions. Everybody knew that the decree was aimed at the "professors," principally at Masaryk and Benes. Even a reactionary government with all its obeisance before Nazi Germany dared not openly proclaim the intent of this decree. It knew that the public would be incensed, so it disguised its aim in a formula calculated to win acquiescence if not approbation, at least to fore-stall hostility. The Nazis, of course, would more than encourage the government to enforce the decree, might even demand that it do so in return for the relaxation of a freshly-planned encroachment on the country's independence, or merely as a step in the well-calculated plan to Nazify Czechoslovakia.

The campaign of the more reactionary journals against the "professors" had already borne bitter fruit. A Czech college student showed me a clipping from a Prague newspaper which told the story of a pupil in a school asking his teacher for permission to tear down from the wall of the classroom the portraits of Benes and Masaryk. The teacher, according to the clipping, suggested to the pupil that he hang the picture of Jesus on the Cross between the portraits of the two presidents of the Republic and then he would have the Lord flanked by the two thieves, exactly as in the story of the New Testament. "But the story isn't true!" cried the college student who showed me the clipping. "It cannot be true: it is an invention. No Czech teacher would speak of Masaryk and Benes in such terms. Munich has ruined and degraded us, but not to such a point of bestiality." He was incensed and heartbroken, and kept repeating that I mustn't believe that Czech school teachers had sunk so low in their moral worth that they would compare Masaryk and Benes to the two thieves who were hanged beside the crucified Jesus.

Perhaps it was a lie, perhaps it wasn't. It was no lie that a group

of students had pulled down with ropes Masaryk's statue in one of the university halls and smashed it—yes, Czech students in the city of Prague! True, they were expelled from the university, and the statue of the first President of the Republic had been reinstated. But the fact of its happening only six weeks after the acceptance of the Munich agreement, above all in Prague and within the walls of a university out of which have come the noblest traditions of the Czech nation, told a tragic story of moral collapse.

And now the governments had actually issued a decree for the removal of the statues and portraits of "political personages" from public institutions! I wondered how the teachers of the country would respond to such a decree. I went over in my mind the teachers I had met in the months of my wanderings in Czechoslovakia. Masaryk, Benes, Stefanik, professors all, had been to them hallowed names. Masaryk had been teacher, guide, inspirer, pillar of fire by day and by night, in fair weather and foul. I could think of no teacher, man or woman, who might carry out this decree with a steady hand, a calm heart, an undimmed eye. Is any task more odious or more degrading than the forced desecration of the hero of one's soul?

I thought of the teachers under whom I had sat in American schools, in New York City and in a farming community: they rose vividly before me—the men and the women who had taught me English, mathematics, languages, science and other subjects, and I asked myself how they would feel if *their* government had of a sudden instructed them to dishonour the name and the memory of Washington. Masaryk *was* the George Washington of the Czechoslovak Republic. During his life he had had his enemies; but so had Washington. Two million people had come to his funeral. Hardly a Czech teacher but had seen him, heard him; many of them had known him intimately. Philosopher and humanitarian, he had also been the inspirer of the Legionnaires, who during the World War at the risk of death had deserted from the Austrian and Hungarian armies and joined the Russian, the French, the Italian forces and fought with the Allies against the Central Powers so as to win for their people freedom from servitude to the Hapsburgs. His sayings had become a part of the moral fibre of the people and of their everyday speech. He had

been the hero and the idol of the youth of the land, and now he was to be dishonoured by his own countrymen, perhaps at the behest of Berlin, perhaps at the insistence of a small group of reactionary politicians who never had respected the man's humanitarianism or the humanitarian traditions of their martyred ancestors.

I remembered the words of the *Lidový Noviny* on the day after the acceptance of the Munich agreement—the most heartbreaking that had been penned by any Czechs before or since then :

“ We wanted to sing with the angels, now we must howl with the wolves.”

It had seemed to me that this decree, more than anything I had read, heard, or observed in the weeks of agony and wrath since Munich, was as if the fulfilment of those fearful words! When it reached the Czechoslovak legation in London, no one there—neither secretary, nor clerk, nor janitor—would dare lay his hands on the portrait of the dead “ professor.” Prague, or rather the new government there, might seek hurriedly to divest itself of every vestige of Czech humanitarianism and all sense of veneration and respect for the dead hero of the people, but the Czechs at work in the London legation would tarnish neither their hands nor their souls with the execution of the sinister decree. And then Jan Masaryk, minister of the legation and son of the late President, took it upon himself to perform the tragic duty, and mounting a chair hauled down the outlawed portrait!

But the people in the country resented the defamation of their dead hero, all the more brutal because it was their own government, made up of Czechs like themselves, who had ordered it. In school after school children cried out against the insult to the Father of the Republic. In one place, after the portraits and busts were removed, the children plastered the walls on which they had exhibitions of their school work with fresh portraits of the man. In many places they went on strike or threatened to go on strike if the decree were carried out. Dr. Hacha, the newly elected President, as if in protest against the vilification of the dead “ professor,” and to set at rest all speculation at home and abroad—including Berlin—of his personal attitude towards the memory of the man,

demonstratively paid a visit to Masaryk's grave and laid on it a wreath. Embarrassed and perhaps frightened at the mounting protests against its summary action, the government hastened to restore Masaryk to his former place of honour in schools and public institutions. Yet the fact that it had sought to degrade him is a striking symptom or consequence of the moral collapse of the once bright and enlightened and justice-loving Czechoslovakia—that is, of its government, but not of its people. Wronged and crushed and humiliated as they have been, they were quick to manifest their revulsion against the obloquy that was visited so demonstratively on the man they loved. Henceforth more and more the world will need to accustom itself to thinking of Czechoslovakia as one more nation in which government and people no longer express each other's aims or character.

One evening I was sitting in my room and writing when I heard wild shouts in the street. I looked out the window and saw only the usual crowds promenading on the Watslavsky Namesti and heard no more than the usual sounds of trams, automobiles, human voices. I went back to my work, and presently the shouts rose again, as wild and as brief as before. Once more I looked out of the window; the scene was the same, with no sounds other than those of ordinary traffic. I shut the window and started writing again, and for the third time the shouts burst on me, as of a large group of enraged men crying out their emotions at the top of their voices.

I ran down into the street and asked a policeman what had happened. He would not answer my question. Czech policemen do not care to inform interrogators of the disorders they witness or are called upon to quell. So I made inquiries of other people and learned that there was an anti-Semitic demonstration, the first that Prague had witnessed in all the years of the Republic. Young lawyers, physicians, students had been marching and shouting, "Out with the Jews!" They had entered cafés and driven out Jewish customers, including a well-known Czechoslovakian actor. The police quickly broke up the demonstrations and arrested the demonstrators. Afterwards, every evening, I saw special squads and uniformed men riding around or standing at the corners of

the Watslavsky Namesti: the government was determined not to allow anti-Semitic outbreaks in the streets. One censor asked an Ameriran newspaperman to leave out the story of the demonstration from his cable, and when the American asked why he must do so, the censor replied, "We are ashamed of our anti-Semitism." This censor happened to be a disciple of Masaryk and Benes, and men like him shudder at the prospect of a Nazi brand of anti-Semitism in Czechoslovakia.

And well they may, for no government in Europe had treated all groups of Jews—the Orthodox, the Reformed, those who insisted on calling themselves Germans or Hungarians, and those who through their past behaviour in certain Slovak and Ruthenian villages had aroused the ill will of the peasantry—with a more humane understanding of their position than had Czechoslovakia in the pre-Munich days. As I have already narrated in a previous part of this book, the "professors" interpreted the condition of the Jew in their own country, not in terms of personal traits or racial heritages, but in terms of the environment under which he had been living in old Austria-Hungary. They didn't discriminate against Jews in any field of human endeavour. They had built special schools for them with Hebrew as the official language, since that was the language the Jews in Mukachevo, for example, wanted to perpetuate. But now that the Republic was gone, that Masaryk had been dishonoured, that Berlin was seeking more and more to dominate the ideology of Czechoslovakia, the Jews—especially those who had migrated there since the beginning of the Republic, or who had preferred to register as German citizens—could expect no concessions and no favours. "When we had freedom and good living," said a Czech businessman, "we shared it with everybody and we never bothered about a man's religion, race or nationality. Now we have no freedom and no good living any more, we cannot be generous even with our own refugees." True enough, considering the tens of thousands of Czech refugees who had fled from the Sudetens, from Teschen, from the lands which Vienna had assigned to Hungary, or who had been cast across the frontiers like unwanted cattle by Hungarian and Polish gendarmes! Not the least of the tragedies that grew out of the Munich agreement was the speed with which ordinary folk—farmers and workers,

shopkeepers and school teachers—were obliged to change allegiance or to flee to some other land in search of safety for their lives!

Yet anti-Semitism already impregnates the very atmosphere of Prague and of government offices everywhere. More and more Jews have been dismissed from educational institutions and from other official positions. Jewish businessmen have been advised openly and secretly by friends and enemies to contract partnerships with Aryans. At the time of this writing one sweeping law has already been passed banning Jewish physicians from holding office in the three largest government health-insurance societies—of the civil-service workers, of railway employees and of post-office officials. More laws are certain to be passed, for Nazi Germany is pressing with increasing vehemence for their enactment. More and more Jews, even those who had identified themselves with Czech civilization and Czech nationalism, are searching the globe for a place of safety to which they might emigrate. They are disheartened and terror-stricken. As one Jewish scholar said to me:

"They say there are too many Jewish physicians in this country. Of course it is true. They say there are too many Jewish lawyers in this country. Of course it is true. They say there are too many Jewish businessmen in the country. Of course it is true. In fact it is even true that there are too many Jews of any and all kinds in this country or in the world. There shouldn't have been any at all, not even Jesus!"

On the basis of the rapid swing of the Prague government into an authoritarian rule and the repudiation, one after another, of the liberties and the humanitarianism which the "professors" had instilled into the lifeblood of the nation, it would be easy to conclude with a number of British and American writers that Czechoslovakia as she was has for ever been blown to shreds by the apostles of Power Politics. "Look at the blokes," said an Irish editor to me in London. "They're doing all the dirty work the Nazis demand of them. They've sent back a refugee who's lived in their country for four years to have his head chopped off, and they're already taking their soreness out on the Jews. You can't tell me people like that are of much account any more to humanity."

It was strange and tragic to hear such words about a people who

until the time of the Munich agreement were stalwart champions of the most reasoned humanitarianism in the world! Yet in spite of the obscurantism and intolerance that are sweeping the land and in spite of decrees which its government had already promoted or may continue to enact in subversion of the very tenets of the age-old Czech civilization, the Czech people deep in their hearts have neither broken nor forsaken the spirit or the substance of this civilization. They may be temporarily stunned, and they are helpless now—"almost as much so," to quote one of their writers, "as an animal in a zoo. It's the will of the keeper that mostly matters now."

A Czech Lutheran preacher while discoursing on this very subject drew a copy of an English Bible from his shelf and read aloud the following verses:

"‘He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out: He hath made my chain heavy.

"‘He hath enclosed my ways with hewn stone, He hath made my paths crooked.’

"That's exactly what's happened to us," he commented with feeling. "We are licked. We're bound hand and foot. We must do whatever Nazi Germany demands of us, practically, for we cannot enforce our will and we've got to live." Then he read again:

"‘He hath builded against me and compassed me with gall and travail.’

"Yes, 'with gall and travail,'" went on this saddened man. "We Czechs love to honour our dead ancestors; but many of us like myself must now forego that privilege because even our dead are no longer in our own land. If you were a Czech, you'd know the gall that the occupation of Chodsko has poured into our blood. Chodsko!" this elderly and grey-haired preacher repeated with a throb. "Nothing is sacred to them: nothing satisfies them. Perhaps we shall lose everything, even our bread, but our souls we shall keep. Whatever our politicians may do, our souls we, the people, shall keep." And after a pause he added gravely: "It's a nightmare, all that's happened to us, and within such a short

time! Sometimes I sit in my study and slap my forehead and say to myself: 'But this isn't true! It's impossible! We are a free people; we don't hate anybody; we don't even bear ill will to anybody. We're descendants of John Huss and Kamensky and Palatsky and Masaryk.' And then I go out into the street and look at the headlines of certain newspapers, and the words of hate that glare out of them frighten me, and I walk on and on, and my heart sinks lower and lower and I see only darkness before me. Yes, a nightmare, my friend. . . . You'll never understand it—never!"

What a nightmare! Here was a people in servitude for three hundred years; then history beckoned to them and with their courage and their blood they won back their independence. They built up their industries, their agriculture, their education, their democracy, above all a fresh method of reconciling races and nationalities that had always hated and warred with one another. Despite wrongs and blunders which they had never concealed, they had achieved under a system of freedom a pleasurable standard of living such as few people in Europe enjoyed—hardly any except the Scandinavian countries, Switzerland and Holland, which because of the accident of their geography had for a long time escaped the hates and the ravages of wars. A leading British statesman said to a Czech writer, "If your country were somewhere out of the way like Finland, people from all over the world would make pilgrimages there to admire your civilization and to learn from you."

Then Power Politics loosened upon these people one attack after another. Then came Runciman, Berchtesgaden, Godesberg; with their best friends pushing them deeper and deeper into a policy of self-annihilation. Then came Munich. Then the Fifth Zone, the Sixth Zone, Chodsko, the Vienna settlement, the agreement with Hungary and Poland, the smash-up of transportation, of industry, of agriculture, of education, of democracy, of the very spirit of the people. Never in all history had a nation so enlightened, so prosperous, so secure, so powerful, on its own soil been compelled by its best friends to break itself to pieces, "to tear its own heart, yes, with its own hands," as a Czech editor had once cried out, "and spit on it." Let the reader attempt to imagine the shock, the agony, the degradation that had swept

hurricane-like over the Czech nation in the days of the crisis and since then, when hardly a day passes but they are "compassed" with fresh potions of "gall and travail." There seems no end to the humiliations that they must daily swallow. Is it any wonder that so many of them have become dismayed and brutalized and deep in their hearts hate not only the Germans, but the French, the English, the Jews, democracy, humanitarianism, the "professors" and all that in the pre-Munich days the Republic had espoused and emulated? "My father wanted me to be a democrat and a gentleman, but . . . I want to make of myself a Fascist and a barbarian." It was Munich and all that followed which had brutalized, though perhaps only temporarily, not only the tongue but the mind and the heart of this young Czech and of many of his countrymen.

"Our immediate policy," says one leading Czech general, "must be based upon this reality. German diplomacy has succeeded in completely paralyzing our military strength. Let us make no illusion about that. Therefore, regardless of whether or not we wish it, our policy must be grounded in a good relationship with Germany, which we should long ago have done hadn't the noble West threatened us with a dissolution of our alliances. We don't reproach ourselves. We are going to learn: we are going to remember: we shall act accordingly; only no prayers, no wailing, no forensics. Time will come when Europe will hear from us again. Meantime, let us take Germany as an example of what in twenty years since 1918, since her terrible humiliation, she has been able to accomplish." Note the spirit of the man, one of Czechoslovakia's leading military minds: "no prayers, no wailing, no forensics," only action and more action and still more action and "Germany as an example"!

No wonder, also, that on the 2nd of December the *Venkov*, the leading organ of the Agrarian party, which since the crisis has become the ruling party in the country, printed the following:

"As a result of our new frontiers the Czechs will be able to dispose of more goods to Germany than to Slovakia. We must join the Central European economic *bloc* which is under Germany's preponderant influence. In re-establishing our industries

we must have regard for Germany's industrial condition and refrain from building new industries of which Germany already has many. We can only produce commodities for which there is a German demand. Our standard of living will depend on that of our neighbour. If, for example, Germany should get back her colonies, that would be of benefit to us economically, since . . . we have no colonies and no access to raw materials."

In their military, economic and political helplessness they must do the bidding of their powerful neighbour. They must not even build any industries, so this writer proclaims, to which Germany might object, though there are buyers in Prague with ample cash, dollars and pounds, ready to buy glassware and textiles, but only if made in Czechoslovakia.

"We wanted to sing with the angels, now we must howl with the wolves."

When I read of the plan of the new Czechoslovak government to rewrite and change the textbooks in the schools, I asked myself, "Whom are the new rulers of the country going to set up as the heroes of their nation?" I could not think of one "blood-and-thunder man" in Czech history who, by the most skilful manipulation, could be transmuted into a personality that would excite the emotions or the imaginations of Czech children. The Czechs have hardly had such a man in ancient or in modern times. The men who have made and glorified Czech history have been not soldiers but scholars and humanitarians. Their famous soldier, General Zhizhka, one of the great soldiers of all times, was a disciple of John Huss and had led one of the most important reform movements in Europe. King Wenceslas, George of Podebrad, Charles IV, their most distinguished rulers, were also renowned for their advanced views on life and government. Not one of them—certainly neither Wenceslas nor Podebrad—could be moulded into a Fascist hero. The other men in their history—John Huss, Prokop Holj, Kamensky, Khelchitsky, Palatsky, Havlichek, Masaryk—have been preachers, professors, men of letters who never uttered a word or performed an act that could, with the most violent twist of the imagination, be construed as a justification of totalitarianism, authoritarianism, Fascism, or even of

racial or religious intolerance. Unlike other nations, the "villains" in Czech history have never excited the imagination of the people. Besides, the Czechs hardly have such villains. "You know," said a British writer with whom I was discussing this aspect of Czech civilization, "the Czechs resemble the Scots more than any other people. I know the Scots have produced their share of famous soldiers, yet wherever you go in Scotland you see statues to Walter Scott, to Robert Burns, to David Livingstone, Joseph Lister." There is more truth than glibness in this comparison. Like the Scots, the Czechs are frugal, industrious, extraordinarily competent, home-loving, possessed of inordinate personal integrity, above all "reasonable" in their dealings with one another and with the outside world; and like the Scots they care little for the soldier, but enormously for the prophet and the man of letters.

Who, then, shall be the heroes in the textbooks, which the new authoritarian Czech government proposes to put into the hands of Czech children? The German children have their Fuehrer; but Czechoslovakia never has had such a Fuehrer, and while there are a number of men in the country who yearn to make of themselves Fuehrers in a Fascized Czechoslovakia, none of them has evinced the least talent for rousing the enthusiasm of the young generation. Besides, Czechs don't like parades, don't care for dramatics, don't espouse and don't welcome mass hysteria. "*Czechs always think*"—a sentence that stamps a Czech as a person who isn't easily swept off his feet by outward gestures, symbols or incantations, however loud or mystical.

The ancestral inheritance of the Czechs cannot be scraped out of them like the mud that one scrapes off one's boots.

"We believe that in history," said the late Karel Capek in his Prayer on the 21st of September, "we have not stood . . . on the side of wrong." He meant that in their history the Czechs had never championed or supported "blood-and-thunder" crusades except when resulting, as did the Hussite wars, from rebellion against injustice. Unlike other Slav people, the Czechs throughout their history had stood out against the despoliation of truth and the mutilation of the human personality. I know of no other people whose scholars, publicists, preachers have used the

word truth with such frequency and vigour as have Czechs. Will, or can, Germany, with the aid of a small group of Czech reactionaries, reverse the stream of Czech civilization and deflect its course into its own waters of Nazi turbulence and blood? I have found not a single Czech, not even among the most reactionary Agrarians, who would do more than laugh at the mere suggestion of such an eventuality.

As long as Nazi Germany remains the dominant power in Europe with her heel on the throat of Czechoslovakia, we can hope for no renaissance in that country in politics, in sociology, in the arts; we can only expect continuous and increasing repression and obscurantism, perhaps even a modified or a literal version of "Nuremberg laws." Czechoslovakia will not dare to disobey the will of Germany violently, only because she knows the futility of such disobedience. Besides, from day to day she is becoming more and more dependent on Germany for her bread, and not much has changed in the world since the day of Shakespeare to invalidate the words, "He takes my life who takes the means whereby I live," which might as well have read, "He rules my life who rules the means whereby I live."

One can only speak of an independent future for Czechoslovakia if Nazi Germany collapses, either because of an internal explosion or because of a war in which she is not the decisive victor. Then and only then will Czechoslovakia have the chance to rehabilitate herself body and soul.

Indeed, then she will be the most important nation in Central Europe, far more important than she was in the pre-Munich days. She is for one thing the only nation in that part of the Continent with an ancient and robust democratic and humanitarian tradition, which neither the Nazis nor the Agrarian leaders can uproot. Formidable will be the attack on it, and at times it may appear as though it would yield to internal and external onslaughts, as in the event of the Nuremberg laws being passed or concentration camps started for Socialists, liberals and other upholders of the democratic tradition. Even the reactionary Agrarian leadership, so Czechs believe, will fight against the inauguration of either. But they might yield to the demands and the threats of their powerful neighbour. Yet deep in their souls the people will only

suffer anguish and torment at the passage of laws or the launching of practices that will invoke upon them the harsh judgment or the ill will of the outside world, and especially of the people in the English-speaking countries. “It will be dreadful if America and England come to think of us as swine and barbarians,” said a conservative Czech lawyer. “Never in all our history have we invoked such epithets on ourselves, except of course on the part of malicious enemies.”

With all their woes and disappointments the Czechs have remained a simple people, truly a common people. They have had no aristocracy and no caste system for over three hundred years. Their rich people, as I have already pointed out, lack the lust for ostentation and extravagance, and above all love work for its own sake. Here is a people with no leisured class, with no urge to create such a class or to imitate its ways in the outside world, a people who have never demanded much from life, and who have had to toil for every particle of personal comfort and national glory they have achieved. “Do you know the difference between Czechs and Poles?” said an old Czech in Tabor. “A Pole says, ‘I’m always ready to die for my country,’ and a Czech says, ‘I’m always ready to work for my country.’” Swank, artificiality, pomp, hold no lure for the Czech.

But he is more than a man of simple wants and a democratic tradition. He is a skilled worker: a builder, an organizer, a developer. In industry, in agriculture, in education, in anything he has undertaken in the years of the Republic, he has astonished himself and his neighbours with his capacity to do well the practical work of the world. In competence alone he stands out like a mighty Gibraltar all the way from his borderlands eastwards—across Poland, Hungary, Jugoslavia, Rumania, Turkey, European Russia, Siberia, Japan—across the Pacific, up to the very shores of America; and even America, with her vast experience in practical achievement, can do no better, and often not as well, the things that the Czech has learned to do expertly. In a practical sense the Czech overshadows all his Slav brethren and can hold his own with any of his neighbours.

What an asset such a people would be to a Russia which is

struggling frenziedly to master the technique of working with the modern machine! If ever there is a union between these two Slav peoples—which is not the most fantastic dream in the world—the Czechs will astonish Russia and the world with the contribution they will make to the country's economic development. Indeed, it is their competence as much as their democracy which had made them a real danger to a totalitarian and expansionist Germany and which was one reason why Hitler tried to smash their independence; but in a reshuffling of Europe, whether as a result of war or revolution, their competence, their democracy, their integrity and their physical sturdiness will be assets of incalculable worth and not only to themselves. Who that witnessed the demonstrations in Prague on the 21st and 30th of September can forget the readiness with which Czechs of all ages were willing to die for their independence, their democracy, their humanitarianism?

My last day in Prague was one of the most memorable I experienced in all the time that I had been in Czechoslovakia. It was the end of November—a day of clouds and drizzle and semi-darkness. From earliest morning I started calling on friends to bid them farewell. They were mostly men and women of the intelligentsia. Only a few months earlier they had had a country which they loved, in whose destiny they trusted, for whose independence they were willing to fight and die. They had heroes to worship, ideals to fulfil. They were certain of their jobs, hopeful of their future. The very word Czechoslovakia had stirred in them happy emotions. It was to them more than a country and a home. It was an idea, an adventure, a fulfilment. Now it was still a country and a home, but no longer an idea, at least not their kind of an idea, and neither adventure nor fulfilment. It was a symbol of gloom and collapse, of heroes self-exiled or desecrated, of independence, ideals, hopes shattered or subverted, of jobs already lost or uncertain. The old reality was a ruin, the new an execration. Already *The White Scourge*, the word of their own greatest contemporary author, was banned, a moving picture like that of *The House of Rothschild* forbidden, and any pronouncement even

suggestively derogatory to Fascists, dictators or laudatory of Jews, Socialists, democrats also forbidden.

“Lucky man,” one after another of my friends said, “you have a passport that’s good all over the world and money that’s good wherever you go.” Only a brief few months earlier they too had a passport which was honoured all over the world and money that was everywhere acceptable! And now I actually saw at the airport in Zurich one of their scientists, pale and choked with pain, held in a corner like a beaten dog by a burly immigration official who would not let him remain in the city for even a few days. I had been on the same plane with the man, and he called to me to intercede in his behalf because he had come on an important business errand, but the immigration official would listen neither to his nor to my pleas!

And yet here was G—, a young lawyer, and he said:

“We were pushed off the stage of history before, for three hundred years; but we came back, though for only twenty years; but we justified every day and every hour of those years. We shall be back again—some day.”

And here was Professor N—, with his large dark eyes as luminous with sorrow as they once were with hope, saying: “The Czech people aren’t dead, and neither Hitler nor any one else can kill them. We shall live again!”

“If things get a little too uncomfortable for you, perhaps I can help you get out of here,” I said.

“I’m not thinking of going away. I’m too old, and besides, I want to stay here with my own people. If I cannot stay in Prague I can go elsewhere—to the country. I trust my people. Nobody can corrupt them—not the mass of them. They are poor, and they are going to be still poorer, but they know what honour is.”

“Good-bye, Professor,” I said.”

“Good-bye, and don’t lose faith in us. If you read of hooligans on the Watslavsky Namesti smashing windows of Jewish shops, or attacking the offices of former liberal journals, remember that this is Prague and the forces of evil, our own and from the outside, may get out of hand. But our people all over the land are going to feel ashamed and grief-stricken—oh yes, they will—I know them—please believe me—it is the truth.” A kindly man, a noble man

to the very end, with an unbroken faith in the goodness of his people, and yet like so many other Czechs riven with torment lest the outside world mistake the evil deeds of the few for the evil nature of the mass. I felt that if we talked much longer we should break down and cry, and so we shook hands and parted.

And here was Engineer K——, more nervous than any other Czech I had ever known, puffing continually at a cigarette and fumbling with his hands and his fingers as though at a loss to know what to do with them.

"So you too are leaving us!" he said.

"I have to go home sometime," I answered.

"Of course, of course! I meant no offence. But it hurts like the devil to think of all that's happened to us. . . . Chodsko! I just cannot get it out of my mind, and those mayors from the little villages up there who came to Prague hoping their government would do something so they wouldn't become a part of the Germany they have always distrusted and feared. . . . Poor chaps! Nobody in Prague would even receive them, and they had to be sent home—abandoned by their own government. Such simple and lovely people—always so cheerful and so trustful—and now! Chodsko! A sacred place to us! . . . And they robbed us of it only because they want to show us they are our masters, that's all—just to give us another jab in the heart. But"—and he paused and threw down his cigarette on the floor and instantly picked it up and put it into an ash tray and went on with a burst of hope—"they cannot kill us—that's the main thing. We shall go on and on—and some day we shall live again! If I had the least inkling it was always going to be like this, I wouldn't want to live. What for? I'd blow my brains out. But it cannot go on. It's too insane, too wicked. . . . It must crash, yes, I tell you, it must."

"We shall live again!"

I had heard him speak these words before, and I thought it strange that the professor also should use them. Then I remembered that some orator had spoken them during the demonstrations. They must have struck a responsive chord in a multitude of Czech hearts.

Madame P—— invited me to her home for lunch, "a real Czech lunch," she said over the telephone. I might have known it would

be goose, fried cabbage and dumplings, though the poppy-seed biscuits (*buchty*) for dessert were an added delicacy. During the crisis she had once given me a bagful of *buchty* for foreign correspondents. I rushed with the bag to the office of the *Forepress* and passed out the cakes, still hot, to a number of colleagues and heard one of them say that Hitler might take their country away from the Czechs, but not their Pilsener beer or their delicious cakes. I remembered these words now and repeated them, and Madame P—— and her husband laughed with pleasure. After lunch we talked to the two children—a boy of eleven and a girl of thirteen. Both were attending the English language school, and both were already speaking English.

"I'm so glad we still have that school," said Madame P——. "I want my children to know English above all foreign languages."

"Yes," remarked the husband, "with English they can more easily find a way of earning a living in some foreign land, if only on some wild island in the Pacific Ocean, than with any other language."

"You don't think," I said, "your children will have to emigrate?" It seemed absurd that he, an eminent businessman and still wearing a soldier's uniform—for he had only recently been demobilized—should feel concern for the future of his children in his native land.

"Perhaps not," he said, "but it's best to be prepared for trouble. There is no telling how far Hitler will push himself into our country—and he doesn't love us Czechs. He called us plenty of vile names. And look how he's trying to stir the Slovaks against us and the Ruthenians, so as to keep us weak and divided and poor. What's the use of talking?" There was resignation rather than bitterness in his voice.

"But he won't change our hearts," said Madame P—— as she embraced her dark-eyed and dark-haired daughter, "they'll remain Czech."

"Yes, our Czech hearts will remain with us," said the husband. "Even Mr. Chamberlain cannot give them away."

Of a sudden Madame P——'s eyes filled with tears, and she averted her face and wiped them.

"Quite a change," she whispered, "since I first went with you and the Australians to the Sokol exhibitions!"

"Oh, well," said the husband, "we Czechs can wait. Once we waited for three hundred years. We won't need to wait that long now."

"What do you expect will happen?" I asked.

"I really don't know, but—remember our Czech saying—there is an end to everything but to a sausage, and that has two ends." The boy gave a laugh, and so did Madame P—, and the laughter brought back the cheery spirit that prevailed during the meal.

"Whatever you write about us," said Madame P— as I was making ready to leave, "don't fail to tell people we were shamelessly betrayed but that our day will come again."

"Yes, it will come," echoed the husband with vigour.

And so it was with every Czech I saw. Humbled and hurt as they were, alone and abandoned as they felt, they were silently withdrawing into their inner Czech souls—to wait for the day of battle, death or *emancipation*!

In the evening I went to dinner with Marenka, the Moravian girl and her brother, a rising luminary in the scientific world in Czechoslovakia. We stayed up late eating and drinking wine and talking, and then in a burst of mischief, Marenka said:

"My brother is an old-fashioned Czech."

"But he is so young," I said. He was in his early thirties.

"Ask him," she said, "how long he went around with his wife before he married her."

"Seven years," answered the brother.

"Ask him how long he went around with her before he kissed her?"

"Two years," answered the brother.

"There's a Czech for you," said Marenka and rocked with laughter.

"That's right," repeated the brother with the earnestness of a man emphasizing a scientific fact. "I went around with my wife for seven years before I married her and for two years before I kissed her."

"And he's proud of it," remarked Marenka and guffawed again.

"But you aren't that kind of a Czech," I turned to her.

"I don't believe she is," said the brother.

"You aren't even blushing," I said.

"I've read many American novels," she said.

"And you prefer the American way?"

She burst into fresh laughter.

"I'm a patient man," said the brother earnestly. "All Czechs are patient."

"Too patient," Marenka flung out a little bitterly. Her demeanour instantly changed from levity to earnestness.

"Well, what could we do?" said the doctor. "Enemies all around and not a friend in sight—all run for cover."

"Do you remember what I wrote you from the Tatra?" Marenka asked.

"You were heartbroken," I said.

"I still am, but I also wrote that never again are we going to trust outsiders—never!"

Her deep blue eyes blazed with indignation as she shifted them back and forth from her brother to me. "Runciman and Chamberlain!" she pursued with suppressed emotion. "We won't forget them—never. They've taught us a bitter lesson—and there won't be any more of them in our history. We Czechs are patient, and we also have splendid memories—we don't forget."

"Now we must forget everything and just work and work and work," said the brother.

"And think and think and think," added Marenka.

"What's your opinion?" the brother asked of me. "Is it possible this thing can last—all that's happened to us?"

"Nearly every Czech I've seen to-day," I said, "has been repeating to me the words, 'We shall live again!'"

"We shall," Marenka burst out defiantly.

"Of course we are good workers—and we love to work—and we'll repair the ruin that's upon us now."

"We shall live again!" exclaimed Marenka exultantly, and we lifted our glasses and drank to the fulfilment of these words.

## Chapter XXX

### THEY *SHALL* LIVE AGAIN

HITLER in Prague—already in Prague!

I say already because, after the signing of the Munich agreement and the Czech evacuation of the Sudeten lands, many Czechs expected him sooner or later to swoop down on their capital. He had come to restore order, so he proclaimed to the world. "Unbearable terror," he said, "rules over our German comrades . . . a continuation of this condition must lead to the destruction of the last vestige of order in territory in which Germany is vitally interested."

On reading these words I recalled the discussion a British journalist and I had with a group of Henleinists shortly after my arrival in Prague in the summer of 1938. The Henleinists had deluged us with endless tales of the brutalities of Czechs towards Germans, and we asked for concrete cases and for documentary proof. "Give us," we said, "the medical certificates of those Germans in Czechoslovakia who died from starvation."

"Hundreds and hundreds of our people died from hunger," they cried out almost in unison.

"Show us the medical certificate of one German who died from hunger," we insisted. They promised to bring us a cartload of such certificates, but they never did—not one.

"Give us," we further demanded, "the name of a single German whom the Czechs have executed for political convictions or for political activities, just as Hitler has done in Germany."

Again they promised to fulfil our request, but they never did. Finally we asked them to give us the name of a single German whom the Czechs had ever sent to a concentration camp.

"They are sending hundreds of Germans to jail all the time," the leader of the group told us.

"A jail is one thing," we countered, "and a concentration camp

is another. After all, Germany has a lot of concentration camps, and as far as we know the Czechs have none at all."

"Czech jails are worse than German concentration camps."

We laughed. But they were serious.

"Of course they are," they cried out.

"They are, they are," the leader repeated in the manner of an angry child determined to have its own way.

Afterwards, whenever I met a Henleinist and we discussed the terror of the Czechs, I never failed to ask for the name of at least one German who had starved to death in Czechoslovakia, or whom the Czechs had executed for political reasons, or whom they had sent to a concentration camp. Not once did any Henleinist find it possible to comply with my request. Nor do I know of any other journalist, British or American, who had ever succeeded in obtaining indisputable proof of any of the above forms of terror against Germans in Czechoslovakia.

In spite of never-ending provocations, the government which came into power shortly after the Munich agreement was imposed on Czechoslovakia was especially cautious not to give Hitler, or the small group of Germans still under its nominal jurisdiction, the least excuse for complaint. Brutal as was the Versailles treaty, it contained no provisions comparable in sheer meanness to Germany's occupation of Chodsko—a purely Czech region, a strip of land most sacred to the Czech people—or the demand that Prague keep open a German university for students from Germany. "From every one the Golden Rule," said an exasperated Czech business man in commenting on the occupation of Chodsko, "and to every one the law of the jungle, that's the Nazi code." Yet neither he nor any of his compatriots had carried their hostility, officially or unofficially, beyond verbal expression.

Still, on March 15, 1939: "In order definitely to settle this threat to peace," said Hitler, "... I have decided to allow German troops to-day to march into Bohemia and Moravia." Could any words be more provocative of disorder and terror? Nor did Hitler himself fail to appreciate the explosive nature of his pronouncement or the acts that followed it. When Benes lived in the Hradchany Castle, only one guard was on duty there. During the days of the crisis in September, because of the presence of numerous German spies in

the city, the guard was doubled—and two men were on duty. But when Hitler moved into the castle he was protected by armoured cars, tanks, machine guns and hundreds of men, and even then he dared not make a personal appearance before a Czech crowd.

Within only a few days Hitler stripped the Czechs of all but nominal power over their economic and political life. Their gold, their armaments, their flying fields, their military planes, their barracks were seized. Their press, their schools, their police power were put under Nazi supervision, and thousands of their leaders have already been arrested. Involuntarily one wonders whether Hitler in his fear of Czech virility and Czech hostility will repeat the outrages of the Hapsburgs, who, after their victory over the Czechs in 1620, sought to exterminate their actual and potential leaders—that is, their aristocracy and their intelligentsia. Already the former military camp at Mitkovitse, twenty-five miles from Prague, has been turned into a concentration camp—and that is only a beginning. Will Hitler also bring the execution block to Czechoslovakia?

I was in California when the news of the German occupation of Bohemia and Moravia reached me. I thought of Prague, of Tabor, of Zlin, of Blahotnitze, of Chichmany, of the other places which I had visited and admired and of the many friends I had made there—the dignified and scholarly director of the Zhizhka Museum, the wiry and go-getting mayor of Tabor, the humane Father Shtrbe of Chichmany, and those singing and laughing peasants there. I wondered if they still sang and laughed as heartily as when I had been with them. And the burly Jewish innkeeper in the village and his dark-eyed and black-haired wife with the melancholy twist of her lips—what might have happened to them? Perhaps Father Shtrbe, who had been boarding with them for years, had managed to save them from the barbaric hand of the Hlinka intellectuals or the Nazi invaders. Perhaps, though, they had trailed off into the mountains in search of a way to a new life or only to their death.

I thought of Jan. I remembered his bitterness. Munich had seared his very soul with hate. He had said he would make of himself a Fascist and a barbarian. Perhaps, though, his words were an outburst of outraged emotion rather than an expression of earnest

intent. Had Jan really meant them, Hitler, on his entrance into Prague, would have been accorded a different reception than the one that he found in this ancient and lovable capital of Bohemia. Jan didn't rush forward with a swastika and shout, "Heil Hitler!" He lifted his own flag high over his head and over the buildings on the Watslavsky Namesti in defiance of the new conqueror. Face to face with him, the grimmest enemy his people had ever known, Jan remembered his father and his father's father and all his ancestors, since the days of John Huss and even earlier, back to the days of the saintly King Wenceslas; and none of them had ever out of love or out of respect waved the flag of their conquerors. With prayers and hymns they had again and again gone out to fight and to die for freedom and for the emancipation of the human personality. Perhaps Jan also remembered the words of the stirring prayer which the late Karel Capek had written on the 22nd of September, 1938: "God . . . we needn't tell this to thee, but . . . we believe that in history we have not stood, and will not stand, on the side of wrong." Perhaps Jan remembered more, much more, and the ancient Czech love of freedom so overwhelmed him that he had only jeers and "pfuis" for the new conqueror of his people. Only one photograph of Hitler was on display in the city of Prague on the day he arrived there, and that was in the window of the German Travel Agency. I wondered if Jan was among those who had spat it out of sight. . . . Masaryk Square in Prague has been renamed Hitler Platz. . . . I am sure Jan will never speak of it as Hitler Platz, and if the Germans should erect a statue to Hitler in the place they will need to guard it day and night with machine guns, and even then there is no telling what may happen. . . . The Jans in Czechoslovakia, like their ancestors under the Hapsburgs, may be subjugated in body but not in soul.

I thought of Professor N——. "You know," he once said to me, "I have a feeling that I'll end up in a concentration camp." It would have been easy for a man of his distinction to leave the country. Many an American university would have been glad to accord him the hospitality of its classrooms. But he chose to remain among his own people—to the end! I am certain that Hitler wouldn't tolerate a man of his distinction—a Czech with the spiritual armour of a

John Huss. But whatever may happen to him, he will not doff this armour—not even when his head is pinned to the execution block.

I thought of Marenka and her brother and their friends. They were all such proud and determined Czechs, such stalwart believers in the eventual redemption of their people. Next to Galsworthy, Goethe was Marenka's favourite author. In the few letters she had written me she had quoted several times from Goethe's poetry. She knew many of the poems by heart and loved to recite them. Perhaps the very fact that she has in her library the works of Germany's greatest poet will bring on her the vengeance of the new masters of her country. Perhaps! I wanted to send her a cable—to her and to several of her friends—informing them that it would not be difficult to obtain fellowships for them in American universities. I wrote and rewrote these cables and finally tore them up. With the Gestapo in full sway in Czechoslovakia, any communication from abroad, however innocent in intent, might invite recrimination.

I thought of Czech schoolchildren. Now they will be taught to hate Huss and Komensky and Palatsky and Masaryk and Benes—names that had meant so much to them, that had been symbols of Czech grandeur and Czech nobility. And whom will they be taught to love? Hitler? Goering? Goebbels? If so, they may boycott the schools, and then what? But whatever may happen, their home will remain Czech. Indeed, with Czech nationhood in ruins, the Czech home will become the citadel and the fortress of Czech culture and Czech humanitarianism, and no force on earth—no vitriolic rhetoric, no machine guns, no poison gases, can blast these out of being. The Czechs are past masters in the art of preserving in their homes the magnificent heritage that their ancestors had bequeathed to them.

I thought of Annichka. Of course her employer, though an Agrarian, could no longer protect her. Perhaps he himself had fallen into disgrace, for even an Agrarian, however reactionary, is first and foremost a Czech. No doubt she had lost her job and would have no hope of finding another. She had scorned the very notion of fleeing abroad for safety. She loved the Czech language, Czech culture and the Czech people. Had she swallowed the eight tablets she had been carrying in her handbag so that she could "go to sleep and never wake up"? She had been so cheerful and so courageous

and so determined, and when we parted she had said that if I returned to Prague and she was no longer there, I would know what had happened. . . . How many such Annichkas are there in Czechoslovakia, and how many more will there be in the days of trial and torment and martyrdom ahead of the Czech nation?

Yet more firmly than ever do I believe that the present ordeal is only a phase in the chequered history of the Czechs. Some of them may yield to the new barbarism that is sweeping Central Europe, even as the Hlinka intellectuals have succumbed to it. But only some of them. After all they did want "to sing with the angels," but their friends had abandoned them, and some of them, perhaps out of sheer revenge or contempt for the "democracies," may gloat in the chance they now have "to howl with the wolves." But the mass of the people have their physical sturdiness, their competence, their courage, their heritage, their love of freedom, their love of learning, above all their will to live as Czechs, and the democratic world can count on them in the future as in the past to stand on the side of progress and humanitarianism.

*They shall live again!*

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